



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



THE LIFE AND WORKS

OF

IN

NINETEEN VOLUMES

VOLUME VII

3517 I v



Tailor and Poet

An Autobiography

WITH

A PREFATORY MEMOIR BY THOMAS HUGHES, Esq., Q.C.

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I

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PREFATORY MEMOIR

THE tract appended to this preface has been chosen to accompany *Alton Locke* in order to illustrate, from another side, a distinct period in the life of Charles Kingsley, which stands out very much by itself. It may be taken roughly to have extended from 1848 to 1856. It has been thought that they require a preface, and I have undertaken to write it, as one of the few survivors of those who were most intimately associated with the author at the time to which the works refer.

No easy task ; for, look at them from what point we will, these years must be allowed to cover an anxious and critical time in modern English history ; but, above all, in the history of the working classes. In the first of them the Chartist agitation came to a head and burst, and was followed by the great movement towards association, which, developing in two directions and by two distinct methods—represented respectively by the amalgamated Trades Unions, and Co-operative Societies—has in the intervening years entirely changed the conditions of the labour question in England, and the relations of the working to the upper and middle classes. It is with this, the social and industrial side of the history of those years, that we are mainly concerned here. Charles Kingsley has left other and more important writings of those years. But these are beside our purpose, which is to give some such slight sketch of him as may be possible within the limits of a preface, in the character in which he was first widely known, as the most out-spoken and powerful of those who took the side

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of the labouring classes, at a critical time—the crisis, in a word, when they abandoned their old political weapons, for the more potent one of union and association, which has since carried them so far.

To no one of all those to whom his memory is very dear can this seem a superfluous task, for no writer was ever more misunderstood or better abused at the time, and after the lapse of almost a quarter of a century the misunderstanding would seem still to hold its ground. For through all the many notices of him which appeared after his death in January 1875, there ran the same apologetic tone as to this part of his life's work. While generally, and as a rule cordially, recognising his merits as an author, and a man, the writers seemed to agree in passing lightly over this ground. When it was touched it was in a tone of apology, sometimes tinged with sarcasm, as in the curt notice in the *Times*—‘He was understood to be the Parson Lot of those “Politics for the People” which made no little noise in their time, and as Parson Lot he declared in burning language that to his mind the fault in the “People’s Charter” was that it did not go nearly far enough.’ And so the writer turns away, as do most of his brethren, leaving probably some such impression as this on the minds of most of their readers—‘Young men of power and genius are apt to start with wild notions. He was no exception. Parson Lot’s sayings and doings may well be pardoned for what Charles Kingsley said and did in after years; so let us drop a decent curtain over them, and pass on.’

Now, as very nearly a generation has passed since that signature used to appear at the foot of some of the most noble and vigorous writing of our time, readers of to-day are not unlikely to accept this view, and so to find further confirmation and encouragement in the example of Parson Lot for the mischievous and cowardly distrust of anything like enthusiasm amongst young men, already sadly too prevalent in England. If it were only as a protest against this *surtout point de zèle* spirit, against which it was one of Charles Kingsley’s chief tasks to fight with all his strength, it is well that the facts should be set right.

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This done, readers may safely be left to judge what need there is for the apologetic tone in connection with the name, the sayings, and doings of Parson Lot.

My first meeting with him was in the autumn of 1848, at the house of Mr. Maurice, who had lately been appointed Reader of Lincoln's Inn. No parochial work is attached to that post, so Mr. Maurice had undertaken the charge of a small district in the parish in which he lived, and had set a number of young men, chiefly students of the Inns of Court who had been attracted by his teaching, to work in it. Once a week, on Monday evenings, they used to meet at his house for tea, when their own work was reported upon and talked over. Suggestions were made and plans considered; and afterwards a chapter of the Bible was read and discussed. Friends and old pupils of Mr. Maurice's, residing in the country, or in distant parts of London, were in the habit of coming occasionally to these meetings, amongst whom was Charles Kingsley. He had been recently appointed Rector of Eversley, and was already well known as the author of *The Saint's Tragedy*, his first work, which contained the germ of much that he did afterwards.

His poem, and the high regard and admiration which Mr. Maurice had for him, made him a notable figure in that small society, and his presence was always eagerly looked for. What impressed me most about him when we first met was, his affectionate deference to Mr. Maurice, and the vigour and incisiveness of everything he said and did. He had the power of cutting out what he meant in a few clear words, beyond any one I have ever met. The next thing that struck one was the ease with which he could turn from playfulness, or even broad humour, to the deepest earnest. At first I think this startled most persons, until they came to find out the real deep nature of the man; and that his broadest humour had its root in a faith which realised, with extraordinary vividness, the fact that God's Spirit is actively abroad in the world, and that Christ is in every man, and made him hold fast, even in his saddest moments,—and sad moments were not infrequent

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with him,—the assurance that, in spite of all appearances, the world was going right, and would go right somehow, ‘Not your way, or my way, but God’s way.’ The contrast of his humility and audacity, of his distrust in himself and confidence in himself, was one of those puzzles which meet us daily in this world of paradox. But both qualities gave him a peculiar power for the work he had to do at that time, with which the name of Parson Lot is associated.

It was at one of these gatherings, towards the end of 1847 or early in 1848, when Kingsley found himself in a minority of one, that he said jokingly, he felt much as Lot must have felt in the Cities of the Plain, when he seemed as one that mocked to his sons-in-law. The name Parson Lot was then and there suggested, and adopted by him, as a familiar *nom de plume*. He used it from 1848 up to 1856; at first constantly, latterly much more rarely. But the name was chiefly made famous by his writings in *Politics for the People*, the *Christian Socialist*, and the *Journal of Association*, three periodicals which covered the years from ’48 to ’52; by *Alton Locke*; and by tracts and pamphlets, of which the best known, *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*, is now republished.

In order to understand and judge the sayings and writings of Parson Lot fairly, it is necessary to recall the condition of the England of that day. Through the winter of 1847-8, amidst widespread distress, the cloud of discontent, of which Chartism was the most violent symptom, had been growing darker and more menacing, while Ireland was only held down by main force. The breaking out of the revolution on the Continent in February increased the danger. In March there were riots in London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool, and other large towns. On April 7th, ‘The Crown and Government Security Bill,’ commonly called ‘The Gagging Act,’ was introduced by the Government, the first reading carried by 265 to 24, and the second a few days later by 452 to 35. On the 10th of April the Government had to fill London with troops, and put the Duke of Wellington

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in command, who barricaded the bridges and Downing Street, garrisoned the Bank and other public buildings, and closed the Horse Guards.

When the momentary crisis had passed, the old soldier declared in the House of Lords that 'no great society had ever suffered as London had during the preceding days,' while the Home Secretary telegraphed to all the chief magistrates of the kingdom the joyful news that the peace had been kept in London. In April, the Lord Chancellor, in introducing the Crown and Government Security Bill in the House of Lords, referred to the fact that 'meetings were daily held, not only in London, but in most of the manufacturing towns, the avowed object of which was to array the people against the constituted authority of these realms.' For months afterwards the Chartist movement, though plainly subsiding, kept the Government in constant anxiety; and again in June, the Bank, the Mint, the Custom House, and other public offices were filled with troops, and the Houses of Parliament were not only garrisoned but provisioned as if for a siege.

From that time, all fear of serious danger passed away. The Chartists were completely discouraged, and their leaders in prison; and the upper and middle classes were recovering rapidly from the alarm which had converted a million of them into special constables, and were beginning to doubt whether the crisis had been so serious after all, whether the disaffection had ever been more than skin deep. At this juncture a series of articles appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* on 'London Labour and the London Poor,' which startled the well-to-do classes out of their jubilant and scornful attitude, and disclosed a state of things which made all fair-minded people wonder, not that there had been violent speaking and some rioting, but that the metropolis had escaped the scenes which had lately been enacted in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and other Continental capitals.

It is only by an effort that one can now realise the strain to which the nation was subjected during that winter and spring, and which, of course, tried every individual

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man also, according to the depth and earnestness of his political and social convictions and sympathies. The group of men who were working under Mr. Maurice were no exceptions to the rule. The work of teaching and visiting was not indeed neglected, but the larger questions which were being so strenuously mooted—the points of the people's charter, the right of public meeting, the attitude of the labouring class to the other classes—absorbed more and more of their attention. Kingsley was very deeply impressed with the gravity and danger of the crisis—more so, I think, than almost any of his friends; probably because, as a country parson, he was more directly in contact with one class of the poor than any of them. How deeply he felt for the agricultural poor, how faithfully he reflected the passionate and restless sadness of the time, may be read in the pages of *Yeast*, which was then coming out in *Fraser*. As the winter months went on this sadness increased, and seriously affected his health.

‘I have a longing,’ he wrote to Mr. Ludlow, ‘to *do something*—what, God only knows. You say, “he that believeth will not make haste,” but I think he that believeth *must* make haste, or get damned with the rest. But I will do anything that anybody likes—I have no confidence in myself or in anything but God. I am not great enough for such times, alas! “*nè pour faire des vers*,” as Camille Desmoulins said.’

This longing became so strong as the crisis in April approached, that he came to London to see what could be done, and to get help from Mr. Maurice, and those whom he had been used to meet at his house. He found them a divided body. The majority were sworn in as special constables, and several had openly sided with the Chartists; while he himself, with Mr. Maurice and Mr. Ludlow, was unable to take active part with either side. The following extract from a letter to his wife, written on the 9th of April, shows how he was employed during these days, and how he found the work which he was in search of, the first result of which was the publication of ‘those *Politics for the People* which made no small noise in their times’—

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'April 11th, 1848.—The events of a week have been crowded into a few hours. I was up till four this morning—writing posting placards, under Maurice's auspices, one of which is to be got out to-morrow morning, the rest when we can get money. Could you not beg a few sovereigns somewhere to help these poor wretches to the truest alms!—to words, texts from the Psalms, anything which may keep even one man from cutting his brother's throat to-morrow or Friday? *Pray, pray, help us.* Maurice has given me a highest proof of confidence. He has taken me to counsel, and we are to have meetings for prayer and study, when I come up to London, and we are to bring out a new set of real *Tracts for the Times*, addressed to the highest orders. Maurice is *à la hauteur des circonstances*—determined to make a decisive move. He says, if the Oxford Tracts did wonders, why should not we? Pray for us. A glorious future is opening, and both Maurice and Ludlow seem to have driven away all my doubts and sorrow, and I see the blue sky again, and my Father's face!'

The arrangements for the publication of *Politics for the People* were soon made; and in one of the earliest numbers, for May 1848, appeared the paper which furnishes what ground there is for the statement, already quoted, that 'he declared, in burning language, that the People's Charter did not go far enough.' It was No. 1 of 'Parson Lot's Letters to the Chartists.' Let us read it with its context.

'I am not one of those who laugh at your petition of the 10th of April: I have no patience with those who do. Suppose there were but 250,000 honest names on that sheet—suppose the Charter itself were all stuff—yet you have still a right to fair play, a patient hearing, an honourable and courteous answer, whichever way it may be. But *my only quarrel with the Charter is that it does not go far enough in reform.* I want to see you free, but I do not see that what you ask for will give you what you want. I think you have fallen into just the same mistake as the rich, of whom you complain—the very mistake

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which has been our curse and our nightmare. I mean the mistake of fancying that *legislative* reform is *social* reform, or that men's hearts can be changed by Act of Parliament. If any one will tell me of a country where a Charter made the rogues honest, or the idle industrious, I will alter my opinion of the Charter, but not till then. It disappointed me bitterly when I read it. It seemed a harmless cry enough, but a poor bald constitution-mongering cry as ever I heard. The French cry of "organisation of labour" is worth a thousand of it, but yet that does not go to the bottom of the matter by many a mile.' And then, after telling how he went to buy a number of the Chartist newspaper, and found it in a shop which sold 'flash songsters,' 'the Swell's Guide,' and 'dirty milksop French novels,' and that these publications, and a work called 'The Devil's Pulpit,' were puffed in its columns, he goes on, 'These are strange times. I thought the devil used to befriend tyrants and oppressors, but he seems to have profited by Burns's advice to "tak a thought and mend." I thought the struggling freeman's watchword was: "God sees my wrongs." "He hath taken the matter into His own hands." "The poor committeth himself unto Him, for He is the helper of the friendless." But now the devil seems all at once to have turned philanthropist and patriot, and to intend himself to fight the good cause, against which he has been fighting ever since Adam's time. I don't deny, my friends, it is much cheaper and pleasanter to be reformed by the devil than by God; for God will only reform society on the condition of our reforming every man his own self—while the devil is quite ready to help us to mend the laws and the parliament, earth and heaven, without ever starting such an impertinent and "personal" request, as that a man should mend himself. *That* liberty of the subject he will always respect.'—'But I say honestly, whomsoever I may offend, the more I have read of your convention speeches and newspaper articles, the more I am convinced that too many of you are trying to do God's work with the devil's tools. What is the use of brilliant language about peace,

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and the majesty of order, and universal love, though it may all be printed in letters a foot long, when it runs in the same train with ferocity, railing, mad, one-eyed excitement, talking itself into a passion like a street woman? Do you fancy that after a whole column spent in stirring men up to fury, a few twaddling copybook headings about "the sacred duty of order" will lay the storm again? What spirit is there but the devil's spirit in bloodthirsty threats of revenge?'—"I denounce the weapons which you have been deluded into employing to gain you your rights, and the indecency and profligacy which you are letting be mixed up with them! Will you strengthen and justify your enemies? Will you disgust and cripple your friends? Will you go out of your way to do wrong? When you can be free by fair means, will you try foul? When you might keep the name of Liberty as spotless as the Heaven from which she comes, will you defile her with blasphemy, beastliness, and blood? When the cause of the poor is the cause of Almighty God, will you take it out of His hands to entrust it to the devil? These are bitter questions, but as you answer them so will you prosper."

In Letter II. he tells them that if they have followed a different 'Reformer's Guide' from his, it is 'mainly the fault of us parsons, who have never told you that the true "Reformer's Guide," the true poor man's book, the true "Voice of God against tyrants, idlers, and humbugs, was the Bible." The Bible demands for the poor as much, and more, than they demand for themselves; it expresses the deepest yearnings of the poor man's heart far more nobly, more searchingly, more daringly, more eloquently, than any modern orator has done. I say, it gives a ray of hope—say rather a certain dawn of a glorious future, such as no universal suffrage, free trade, communism, organisation of labour, or any other Morrison's-pill-measure can give—and yet of a future, which will embrace all that is good in these—a future of conscience, of justice, of freedom, when idlers and oppressors shall no more dare to plead parchments and Acts of Parliament for their

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iniquities. I say the Bible promises this, not in a few places only, but throughout ; it is the thought which runs through the whole Bible, justice from God to those whom men oppress, glory from God to those whom men despise. Does that look like the invention of tyrants, and prelates ? You may sneer, but give me a fair hearing, and if I do not prove my words, then call me the same hard name which I shall call any man, who having read the Bible, denies that it is the poor man's comfort and the rich man's warning.'

In subsequent numbers (as afterwards in the *Christian Socialist*, and the *Journal of Association*) he dwells in detail on the several popular cries, such as, 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work,' illustrating them from the Bible, urging his readers to take it as the true Radical Reformer's Guide, if they were longing for the same thing as he was longing for—to see all humbug, idleness, injustice, swept out of England. His other contributions to these periodicals consisted of some of his best short poems : 'The Day of the Lord ;' 'The Three Fishers ;' 'Old and New,' and others ; of a series of Letters on the Frimley murder ; of a short story called 'The Nun's Pool,' and of some most charming articles on the pictures in the National Gallery, and the collections in the British Museum, intended to teach the English people how to use and enjoy their own property.

I think I know every line which was ever published under the signature Parson Lot ; and I take it upon myself to say, that there is in all that 'burning language' nothing more revolutionary than the extracts given above from his letters to the Chartists.

But, it may be said, apart from his writings, did not Parson Lot declare himself a Chartist in a public meeting in London ; and did he not preach in a London pulpit a political sermon, which brought up the incumbent, who had invited him, to protest from the altar against the doctrine which had just been delivered ?

Yes ! Both statements are true. Here are the facts as to the speech, those as to the sermon I will give in their

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place. In the early summer of 1848 some of those who felt with C. Kingsley that the 'People's Charter' had not had fair play or courteous treatment, and that those who signed it had real wrongs to complain of, put themselves into communication with the leaders, and met and talked with them. At last it seemed that the time was come for some more public meeting, and one was called at the Cranbourn Tavern, over which Mr. Maurice presided. After the president's address several very bitter speeches followed, and a vehement attack was specially directed against the Church and the Clergy. The meeting waxed warm, and seemed likely to come to no good, when Kingsley rose, folded his arms across his chest, threw his head back, and began—with the stammer which always came at first when he was much moved, but which fixed every one's attention at once—'I am a Church of England parson'—a long pause—'and a Chartist;' and then he went on to explain how far he thought them right in their claim for a reform of Parliament; how deeply he sympathised with their sense of the injustice of the law as it affected them; how ready he was to help in all ways to get these things set right; and then to denounce their methods, in very much the same terms as I have already quoted from his letters to the Chartists. Probably no one who was present ever heard a speech which told more at the time. I had a singular proof that the effect did not pass away. The most violent speaker on that occasion was one of the staff of the leading Chartist newspaper. I lost sight of him entirely for more than twenty years, and saw him again, a little grey shrivelled man, by Kingsley's side, at the grave of Mr. Maurice, in the cemetery at Hampstead.

The experience of this meeting encouraged its promoters to continue the series, which they did with a success which surprised no one more than themselves. Kingsley's opinion of them may be gathered from the following extract from a letter to his wife:—

'June 4, 1848, Evening.—A few words before bed. I have just come home from the meeting. No one spoke

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but working men, gentlemen I should call them, in every sense of the term. Even *I* was perfectly astonished by the courtesy, the reverence to Maurice, who sat there like an Apollo, their eloquence, the brilliant, nervous, well-chosen language, the deep simple earnestness, the rightness and moderation of their thoughts. And these are the *Chartists*, these are the men who are called fools and knaves—who are refused the rights which are bestowed on every profligate fop. . . . It is God's cause, fear not He will be with us, and if He is with us, who shall be against us ?'

But while he was rapidly winning the confidence of the working classes, he was raising up a host of more or less hostile critics in other quarters by his writings in *Politics for the People*, which journal was in the midst of its brief and stormy career. At the end of June 1848 he writes to Mr. Ludlow, one of the editors—

'I fear my utterances have had a great deal to do with the *Politics*' unpopularity. I have got worse handled than any of you by poor and rich. There is one comfort, that length of ears is in the donkey species always compensated by toughness of hide. But it is a pleasing prospect for me (if you knew all that has been said and written about Parson Lot), when I look forward and know that my future explosions are likely to become more and more obnoxious to the old gentlemen, who stuff their ears with cotton, and then swear the children are not screaming.'

Politics for the People was discontinued for want of funds ; but its supporters, including all those who were working under Mr. Maurice—who, however much they might differ in opinions, were of one mind as to the danger of the time, and the duty of every man to do his utmost to meet that danger—were bent upon making another effort. In the autumn, Mr. Ludlow, and others of their number who spent the vacation abroad, came back with accounts of the efforts at association which were being made by the workpeople of Paris.

The question of starting such associations in England

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as the best means of fighting the slop system—which the *Chronicle* was showing to lie at the root of the misery and distress which bred Chartists—was anxiously debated. It was at last resolved to make the effort, and to identify the new journal with the cause of Association, and to publish a set of tracts in connection with it, of which Kingsley undertook to write the first, *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*.

So the *Christian Socialist* was started, with Mr. Ludlow for editor, the tracts on Christian Socialism begun under Mr. Maurice's supervision, and the society for promoting working-men's associations was formed out of the body of men who were already working with Mr. Maurice. The great majority of these joined, though the name was too much for others. The question of taking it had been much considered, and it was decided, on the whole, to be best to do so boldly, even though it might cost valuable allies. Kingsley was of course consulted on every point, though living now almost entirely at Eversley, and his views as to the proper policy to be pursued may be gathered best from the following extracts from letters of his to Mr. Ludlow—

‘We must touch the workman at all his points of interest. First and foremost at association—but also at political rights, as grounded both on the Christian ideal of the Church, and on the historic facts of the Anglo-Saxon race. Then national education, sanitary and dwelling-house reform, the free sale of land, and corresponding reform of the land laws, moral improvement of the family relation, public places of recreation (on which point I am very earnest), and I think a set of hints from history, and sayings of great men, of which last I have been picking up from Plato, Demosthenes, etc.’

1849.—‘This is a puling, quill-driving, soft-handed age—among our own rank, I mean. Cowardice is called meekness; to temporise is to be charitable and reverent; to speak truth, and shame the devil, is to offend weak brethren, who, somehow or other, never complain of their weak consciences till you hit them hard. And yet, my

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dear fellow, I still remain of my old mind—that it is better to say too much than too little, and more merciful to knock a man down with a pick-axe than to prick him to death with pins. The world says, No. It hates anything demonstrative, or violent (except on its own side), or unrefined.’

1849.—‘The question of property is one of these cases. We must face it in this age—simply because it faces us.’—‘I want to commit myself—I want to make others commit themselves. No man can fight the devil with a long ladle, however pleasant it may be to eat with him with one. A man never fishes well in the morning till he has tumbled into the water.’

And the counsels of Parson Lot had undoubtedly great weight in giving an aggressive tone both to the paper and the society. But if he was largely responsible for the fighting temper of the early movement, he, at any rate, never shirked his share of the fighting. His name was the butt at which all shafts were aimed. As Lot ‘seemed like one that mocked to his sons-in-law,’ so seemed the Parson to the most opposite sections of the British nation. As a friend wrote of him at the time, he ‘had at any rate escaped the curse of the false prophets, “Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.”’ Many of the attacks and criticisms were no doubt aimed not so much at him personally as at the body of men with whom, and for whom, he was working; but as he was (except Mr. Maurice) the only one whose name was known, he got the lion’s share of all the abuse. The storm broke on him from all points of the compass at once. An old friend and fellow-contributor to *Politics for the People*, led the Conservative attack, accusing him of unsettling the minds of the poor, making them discontented, etc. Some of the foremost Chartists wrote virulently against him for ‘attempting to justify the God of the Old Testament,’ who, they maintained, was unjust and cruel, and, at any rate, not the God ‘of the people.’ The political economists fell on him for his anti-Malthusian belief, that the undeveloped fertility of the earth need not be overtaken by

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population within any time which it concerned us to think about. The quarterlies joined in the attack on his economic heresies. The *Daily News* opened a cross fire on him from the common-sense Liberal battery, denouncing the 'revolutionary nonsense, which is termed Christian Socialisms;' and, after some balancing, the *Guardian*, representing in the press the side of the Church to which he leant, turned upon him in a very cruel article on the republication of *Yeast* (originally written for *Fraser's Magazine*), and accused him of teaching heresy in doctrine, and in morals 'that a certain amount of youthful profligacy does no real permanent harm to the character, perhaps strengthens it for a useful and religious life.'

In this one instance Parson Lot fairly lost his temper, and answered, 'as was answered to the Jesuit of old—*mentiris impudentissime*.' With the rest he seemed to enjoy the conflict and 'kept the ring,' like a candidate for the wrestling championship in his own county of Devon against all comers, one down another come on.

The fact is, that Charles Kingsley was born a fighting man, and believed in bold attack. 'No human power ever beat back a resolute forlorn hope,' he used to say; 'to be got rid of, they must be blown back with grape and canister,' because the attacking party have all the universe behind them, the defence only that small part which is shut up in their walls. And he felt most strongly at this time that hard fighting was needed. 'It is a pity,' he writes to Mr. Ludlow, 'that telling people what's right, won't make them do it; but not a new fact, though that ass the world has quite forgotten it; and assures you that dear sweet *incompris* mankind only wants to be told the way to the millennium to walk willingly into it—which is a lie. If you want to get mankind, if not to heaven, at least out of hell, kick them out.' And again, a little later on, in urging the policy which the *Christian Socialist* should still follow—

1851.—'It seems to me that in such a time as this the only way to fight against the devil is to attack him. He has got it too much his own way to meddle with us if we

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don't meddle with him. But the very devil has feelings, and if you prick him will roar . . . whereby you, at all events, gain the not-every-day-of-the-week-to-be-attained benefit of finding out where he is. Unless, indeed, as I suspect, the old rascal plays ventriloquist (as big grass-hoppers do when you chase them), and puts you on a wrong scent, by crying "Fire!" out of saints' windows. Still, the odds are if you prick lustily enough, you make him roar unawares.'

The memorials of his many controversies lie about in the periodicals of that time, and any one who cares to hunt them up will be well repaid, and struck with the vigour of the defence, and still more with the complete change in public opinion, which has brought the England of to-day clean round to the side of Parson Lot. The most complete perhaps of his fugitive pieces of this kind is the pamphlet, *Who are the Friends of Order?* published by J. W. Parker and Son, in answer to a very fair and moderate article in *Fraser's Magazine*. The Parson there points out how he and his friends were 'cursed by demagogues as aristocrats, and by Tories as democrats, when in reality they were neither.' And urges that the very fact of the Continent being overrun with Communist fanatics is the best argument for preaching association here.

But though he faced his adversaries bravely, it must not be inferred that he did not feel the attacks and misrepresentations very keenly. In many respects, though housed in a strong and vigorous body, his spirit was an exceedingly tender and sensitive one. I have often thought that at this time his very sensitiveness drove him to say things more broadly and incisively, because he was speaking as it were somewhat against the grain, and knew that the line he was taking would be misunderstood, and would displease and alarm those with whom he had most sympathy. For he was by nature and education an aristocrat in the best sense of the word, believed that a landed aristocracy was a blessing to the country, and that no country would gain the highest

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liberty without such a class, holding its own position firmly, but in sympathy with the people. He liked their habits and ways, and keenly enjoyed their society. Again, he was full of reverence for science and scientific men, and specially for political economy and economists, and desired eagerly to stand well with them. And it was a most bitter trial to him to find himself not only in sharp antagonism with traders and employers of labour, which he looked for, but with these classes also.

On the other hand, many of the views and habits of those with whom he found himself associated were very distasteful to him. In a new social movement, such as that of association as it took shape in 1849-50, there is certain to be great attraction, for restless and eccentric persons, and in point of fact many such joined it. The beard movement was then in its infancy, and any man except a dragoon who wore hair on his face was regarded as a dangerous character, with whom it was compromising to be seen in any public place—a person in sympathy with *sansculottes*, and who would dispense with trousers but for his fear of the police. Now whenever Kingsley attended a meeting of the promoters of association in London, he was sure to find himself in the midst of bearded men, vegetarians, and other eccentric persons, and the contact was very grievous to him. ‘As if we shall not be abused enough,’ he used to say, ‘for what we must say and do without being saddled with mischievous nonsense of this kind.’ To less sensitive men the effect of eccentricity upon him was almost comic, as when on one occasion he was quite upset and silenced by the appearance of a bearded member of Council at an important deputation in a straw hat and blue plush gloves. He did not recover from the depression produced by those gloves for days. Many of the workmen, too, who were most prominent in the Associations were almost as little to his mind—windy inflated kind of persons, with a lot of fine phrases in their mouths which they did not know the meaning of.

But in spite of all that was distasteful to him in some

of its surroundings, the co-operative movement (as it is now called) entirely approved itself to his conscience and judgment, and mastered him so that he was ready to risk whatever had to be risked in fighting its battle. Often in those days, seeing how loth Charles Kingsley was to take in hand much of the work which Parson Lot had to do, and how fearlessly and thoroughly he did it after all, one was reminded of the old Jewish prophets, such as Amos the herdsman of Tekoa—‘I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son, but I was an herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit : and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and said unto me, Go prophesy unto my people Israel.’

The following short extracts from his correspondence with Mr. Ludlow, as to the conduct of the *Christian Socialist*, and his own contributions to it, may perhaps serve to show how his mind was working at this time :—

Sept., 1850.—‘I cannot abide the notion of Branch Churches or Free (sect) Churches, and unless my whole train of thought alters, I will resist the temptation as coming from the devil. Where I am I am doing God’s work, and when the Church is ripe for more, the Head of the Church will put the means our way. You seem to fancy that we may have a *Deus quidam Deceptor* over us after all. If I did I’d go and blow my dirty brains out and be rid of the whole thing at once. I would indeed. If God, when people ask Him to teach and guide them, does not ; if when they confess themselves rogues and fools to Him, and beg Him to make them honest and wise, He does not, but darkens them, and deludes them into bogs and pitfalls, is He a Father? You fall back into Judaism, friend.’

Dec., 1850.—‘Jeremiah is my favourite book now. It has taught me more than tongue can tell. But I am much disheartened, and am minded to speak no more words in this name [Parson Lot] ; and yet all these bullyings teach one, correct one, warn one—show one that God is not leaving one to go one’s own way. “Christ reigns,” quoth Luther.’

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It was at this time, in the winter of 1850, that *Alton Locke* was published. He had been engaged on it for more than a year, working at it in the midst of all his controversies. The following extracts from his correspondence with Mr. Ludlow will tell readers more about it than any criticism, if they have at all realised the time at which it was written, or his peculiar work in that time.

February, 1849.—‘I have hopes from the book I am writing, which has revealed itself to me so rapidly and methodically that I feel it comes down from above, and that only my folly can spoil it, which I pray against daily.’

1849.—‘I think the notion a good one [referring to other work for the paper which he had been asked to do], but I feel no inspiration at all that way; and I dread being tempted to more and more bitterness, harsh judgment, and evil-speaking. I dread it. I am afraid sometimes I shall end in universal snarling. Besides, my whole time is taken up with my book, and *that* I do feel inspired to write. But there is something else which weighs awfully on my mind—(the first number of Cooper’s *Journal*, which he sent me the other day). Here is a man of immense influence openly preaching Strausseanism to the workmen, and in a fair, honest, manly way which must tell. Who will answer him? Who will answer Strauss?¹ Who will denounce him as a vile aristocrat, robbing the poor man of his Saviour—of the ground of all democracy, all freedom, all association—of the Charter itself? *Oh, si mihi centum voces et ferrea lingua!* Think about *that*.’

January, 1850.—‘A thousand thanks for your letter, though it only shows me what I have long suspected, that I know hardly enough yet to make the book what it should be. As you have made a hole, you must help to fill it. Can you send me any publication which would give me a good notion of the Independents’ view of

¹ He did the work himself. After many interviews, and a long correspondence with him, Thomas Cooper changed his views, and has been lecturing and preaching for many years as a Christian.

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politics, also one which would give a good notion of the Fox-Emerson-Strauss school of Blague-Unitarianism, which is superseding dissent just now. It was with the ideal of Calvinism, and its ultimate bearing on the people's cause, that I wished to deal. I believe that there must be internecine war between the people's church—*i.e.* the future development of Catholic Christianity, and Calvinism even in its mildest form, whether in the Establishment or out of it—and I have counted the cost and will give every *party* its slap in their turn. But I will alter, as far as I can, all you dislike.'

August, 1850.—'How do you know, dearest man, that I was not right in making the Alton of the second volume different from the first? In showing the individuality of the man swamped and warped by the routine of misery and discontent? How do you know that the historic and human interest of the book was not intended to end with Mackay's death, in whom old radicalism dies, "not having received the promises," to make room for the radicalism of the future? How do you know that the book from that point was not intended to take a mythic and prophetic form, that those dreams come in for the very purpose of taking the story off the ground of the actual into the deeper and wider one of the ideal, and that they do actually do what they were intended to do? How do you know that my idea of carrying out Eleanor's sermons in practice were just what I could not—and if I could, dared not give? that all that I could do was to leave them as seed, to grow by itself in many forms, in many minds, instead of embodying them in some action which would have been both as narrow as my own idiosyncrasy, gain the reproach of insanity, and be simply answered by—"If such things have been done, where are they?" and lastly, how do you know that I had not a special meaning in choosing a civilised fine lady as my missionary, one of a class which, as it does exist, God must have something for it to do, and, as it seems, plenty to do, from the fact that a few gentlemen whom I could mention, not to speak of Fowell Buxtons, Howards,

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Ashleys, etc., have done more for the people in one year than they have done for themselves in fifty? If I had made her an organiser, as well as a preacher, your complaint might have been just. My dear man, the artist is a law unto himself—or rather God is a law to him, when he prays, as I have earnestly day after day about this book—to be taught how to say the right thing in the right way—and I assure you I did not get tired of my work, but laboured as earnestly at the end as I did at the beginning. The rest of your criticism, especially about the interpenetration of doctrine and action, is most true, and shall be attended to.—Your brother, C. K.’

The next letter, on the same topic, in answer to criticisms on *Alton Locke*, is addressed to a brother clergyman—

‘EVERSLEY, *January 13, 1851.*

‘REV. DEAR SIR—I will answer your most interesting letter as shortly as I can, and if possible in the same spirit of honesty as that in which you have written to me.

‘*First*, I do not think the cry “Get on” to be anything but a devil’s cry. The moral of my book is that the working man who tries to get on, to desert his class and rise above it, enters into a lie, and leaves God’s path for his own—with consequences.

‘*Second*, I believe that a man might be as a tailor or a costermonger, every inch of him a saint, a scholar, and a gentleman, for I have seen some few such already. I believe hundreds of thousands more would be so, if their businesses were put on a Christian footing, and themselves given by education, sanitary reforms, etc., the means of developing their own latent capabilities—I think the cry, “Rise in Life,” has been excited by the very increasing impossibility of being anything but brutes while they struggle below. I know well all that is doing in the way of education, etc., but I do assert that the disease of degradation has been for the last forty years increasing faster than the remedy. And I believe, from experience,

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that when you put workmen into human dwellings, and give them a Christian education, so far from wishing discontentedly to rise out of their class, or to level others to it, exactly the opposite takes place. They become sensible of the dignity of work, and they begin to see their labour as a true calling in God's Church, now that it is cleared from the accidentia which made it look, in their eyes, only a soulless drudgery in a devil's workshop of a *World*.

'*Third*, From the advertisement of an "English Republic" you send, I can guess who will be the writers in it, etc. etc., being behind the scenes. It will come to nought. Everything of this kind is coming to nought now. The workmen are tired of idols, ready and yearning for the Church and the Gospel, and such men as your friend may laugh at Julian Harney, Feargus O'Connor, and the rest of that smoke of the pit. Only we live in a great crisis, and the Lord requires great things of us. The fields are white to harvest. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He may send forth labourers into His harvest.

'*Fourth*, As to the capacities of working men, I am afraid that your excellent friend will find that he has only the refuse of working intellects to form his induction on. The devil has got the best long ago. By the neglect of the Church, by her dealing (like the Popish Church and all weak churches) only with women, children, and beggars, the cream and pith of working intellect is almost exclusively self-educated, and, therefore, alas! infidel. If he goes on as he is doing, lecturing on history, poetry, science, and all the things which the workmen crave for, and can only get from such men as H——, Thomas Cooper, etc., mixed up with Straussism and infidelity, he will find that he will draw back to his Lord's fold, and to his lecture-room, slowly, but surely, men, whose powers will astonish him, as they have astonished me.

'*Fifth*, The workmen whose quarrels you mention are not Christians, or socialists either. They are of all creeds and none. We are teaching them to become Christians by teaching them gradually that true socialism, true

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liberty, brotherhood, and true equality (not the carnal dead level equality of the Communist, but the spiritual equality of the Church idea, which gives every man an equal chance of developing and using God's gifts, and rewards every man according to his work, without respect of persons) is only to be found in loyalty and obedience to Christ. They do quarrel, but if you knew how they used to quarrel before association, the improvement since would astonish you. And the French associations do not quarrel at all. I can send you a pamphlet on them, if you wish, written by an eye-witness, a friend of mine.

'*Sixth*, If your friend wishes to see what can be made of workmen's brains, let him, in God's name, go down to Harrow Weald, and there see Mr. Monro—see what he has done with his own national school boys. I have his opinion as to the capabilities of those minds, which we, alas! now so sadly neglect. I only ask him to go and ask of that man the question which you have asked of me.

'*Seventh*, May I, in reference to myself and certain attacks on me, say, with all humility, that I do not speak from hearsay now, as has been asserted, from second-hand picking and stealing out of those "*Reports on Labour and the Poor*," in the *Morning Chronicle*, which are now being reprinted in a separate form, and which I entreat you to read if you wish to get a clear view of the real state of the working classes.

'From my cradle, as the son of an active clergyman, I have been brought up in the most familiar intercourse with the poor in town and country. My mother, a second Mrs. Fry, in spirit and act. For fourteen years my father has been the rector of a very large metropolitan parish—and I speak what I know, and testify that which I have seen. With earnest prayer, in fear and trembling, I wrote my book, and I trust in Him to whom I prayed that He has not left me to my own prejudices or idols on any important point relating to the state of the possibilities of the poor for whom He died. Any use which you choose you can make of this letter. If it should seem worth your while to honour me with any further communications,

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I shall esteem them a delight, and the careful consideration of them a duty.—Believe me, Rev. and dear sir, your faithful and obedient servant,
C. KINGSLEY.'

By this time the society for promoting associations was thoroughly organised, and consisted of a council of promoters, of which Kingsley was a member, and a central board, on which the managers of the associations and a delegate from each of them sat. The council had published a number of tracts, beginning with *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*, which had attracted the attention of many persons, including several of the London clergy, who connected themselves more or less closely with the movement. Mr. Maurice, Kingsley, Hansard, and others of these, were often asked to preach on social questions, and when in 1851, on the opening of the Great Exhibition, immense crowds of strangers were drawn to London, they were specially in request. For many London incumbents threw open their churches, and organised series of lectures, specially bearing on the great topic of the day. It was now that the incident happened which once more brought upon Kingsley the charge of being a revolutionist, and which gave him more pain than all other attacks put together. One of the incumbents before referred to begged Mr. Maurice to take part in his course of lectures, and to ask Kingsley to do so; assuring Mr. Maurice that he 'had been reading Kingsley's works with the greatest interest, and earnestly desired to secure him as one of his lecturers.' 'I promised to mention this request to him,' Mr. Maurice says, 'though I knew he rarely came to London, and seldom preached except in his own parish. He agreed, though at some inconvenience, that he would preach a sermon on the "Message of the Church to the Labouring Man." I suggested the subject to him. The incumbent intimated the most cordial approval of it. He had asked us, not only with a previous knowledge of our published writings, but expressly because he had that knowledge. I pledge you my word that no questions were asked as to what we were going to say, and no

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guarantees given. Mr. Kingsley took precisely that view of the message of the Church to labouring men which every reader of his books would have expected him to take.'

Kingsley took his text from Luke iv. verses 16 to 21 : 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor,' etc. What then was that gospel ? Kingsley asks, and goes on — 'I assert that the business for which God sends a Christian priest in a Christian nation is, to preach freedom, equality, and brotherhood in the fullest, deepest, widest meaning of those three great words ; that in as far as he so does, he is a true priest, doing his Lord's work with his Lord's blessing on him ; that in as far as he does not he is no priest at all, but a traitor to God and man ;' and again, 'I say that these words express the very pith and marrow of a priest's business ; I say that they preach freedom, equality, and brotherhood to rich and poor for ever and ever.' Then he goes on to warn his hearers how there is always a counterfeit in this world of the noblest message and teaching.

Thus there are two freedoms—the false, where a man is free to do what he likes ; the true, where a man is free to do what he ought.

Two equalities—the false, which reduces all intellects and all characters to a dead level, and gives the same power to the bad as to the good, to the wise as to the foolish, ending thus in practice in the grossest inequality ; the true, wherein each man has equal power to educate and use whatever faculties or talents God has given him, be they less or more. This is the divine equality, which the Church proclaims, and nothing else proclaims as she does.

Two brotherhoods—the false, where a man chooses who shall be his brothers, and whom he will treat as such ; the true, in which a man believes that all are his brothers, not by the will of the flesh, or the will of man, but by the will of God, whose children they all are alike. The Church has three special possessions and treasures.

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The Bible, which proclaims man's freedom, Baptism his equality, the Lord's Supper his brotherhood.

At the end of this sermon (which would scarcely cause surprise to-day if preached by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Chapel Royal) the incumbent got up at the altar and declared his belief that great part of the doctrine of the sermon was untrue, and that he had expected a sermon of an entirely different kind. To a man of the preacher's vehement temperament it must have required a great effort not to reply at the moment. The congregation was keenly excited, and evidently expected him to do so. He only bowed his head, pronounced the blessing, and came down from the pulpit.

I must go back a little to take up the thread of his connection with, and work for, the Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations. After it had passed the first difficulties of starting, he was seldom able to attend either Council or Central Board. Every one else felt how much more important and difficult work he was doing by fighting the battle in the press, down at Eversley, but he himself was eager to take part in the everyday business, and uneasy if he was not well informed as to what was going on.

Sometimes, however, he would come up to the Council, when any matter specially interesting to him was in question, as in the following example, when a new member of the Council, an Eton master, had objected to some strong expressions in one of his letters on the Frimley murder, in the *Christian Socialist* :—

1849.—‘The upper classes are like a Yankee captain sitting on the safety-valve, and serenely whistling—but what will be will be. As for the worthy Eton parson, I consider it infinitely expedient that he be entreated to vent his whole dislike in the open Council forthwith, under a promise on my part not to involve him in any controversy or reprisals, or to answer in any tone except that of the utmost courtesy and respect. Pray do this. It will at once be a means of gaining him, and a good example, please God, to the working men; and for the Frimley

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letter, put it in the fire if you like, or send it back to have the last half re-written, or "anything else you like, my pretty little dear."'

But his prevailing feeling was getting to be, that he was becoming an outsider—

'Nobody deigns to tell me,' he wrote to me, 'how things go on, and who helps, and whether I can help. In short, I know nothing, and begin to fancy that you, like some others, think me a lukewarm and time-serving aristocrat, after I have ventured more than many, because I had more to venture.'

The same feeling comes out in the following letter, which illustrates too, very well, both his deepest conviction as to the work, the mixture of playfulness and earnestness with which he handled it, and his humble estimate of himself. It refers to the question of the admission of a new association to the Union. It was necessary of course, to see that the rules of a society, applying for admission to the Union, were in proper form, and that sufficient capital was forthcoming, and the decision lay with the Central Board, controlled in some measure by the Council of Promoters.

An association of clay-pipe makers had applied for admission, and had been refused by the vote of the Central Board. The Council, however, thought there were grounds for reconsidering the decision, and to strengthen the case for admission, Kingsley's opinion was asked. He replied :—

‘EVERSLEY, *May* 31, 1850.

‘The sight of your handwriting comforted me—for nobody takes any notice of me, not even the printers ; so I revenge myself by being as idle as a dog, and fishing, and gardening, and basking in this glorious sun. But your letter set me thanking God that He has raised up men to do the work of which I am not worthy. As for the pipe-makers, give my compliments to the autocrats, and tell them it is a shame. The Vegetarians would have quite as much right to refuse the Butchers, because, for-

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sooth, theirs is now discovered not to be a necessary trade. Bosh! The question is this—If association be a great Divine law and duty, the realisation of the Church idea, no man has a *right* to refuse any body of men, into whose heart God has put it to come and associate. It may be answered that these men's motives are self-interested. I say, "Judge no man." You dare not refuse a heathen baptism because you choose to think that his only motive for turning Christian is the selfish one of saving his own rascally soul. No more have you a right to refuse to men an entrance into the social Church. They must come in, and they will, because association is not men's dodge and invention but God's law for mankind and society, which He has made, and we must not limit. I don't know whether I am intelligible, but what's more important, I know I am right. Just read this to the autocrats, and tell them with my compliments, they are Popes, Tyrants, Manichees, Ascetics, Sectarians, and everything else that is abominable; and if they used as many pipes as I do, they would know the blessing of getting them cheap, and start an associate baccy factory besides. Shall we try? But, this one little mistake excepted (though, if they repeat it, it will become a great mistake, and a wrong, and a ruinous wrong), they are much better fellows than poor I, and doing a great deal more good, and at every fresh news of their deeds I feel like Job's horse, when he scents the battle afar off.'

No small part of the work of the Council consisted in mediating and arbitrating in the disputes between the associates and their managers; indeed, such work kept the legal members of the board (none of whom were then overburdened with regular practice) pretty fully occupied. Some such dispute had arisen in one of the most turbulent of these associations, and had been referred to me for settlement. I had satisfied myself as to the facts, and considered my award, and had just begun to write out the draft, when I was called away from my chambers, and left the opening lines lying on my desk. They ran as

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follows :—‘ The Trustees of the Mile End Association of Engineers, seeing that the quarrels between the associates have not ceased ’—at which word I broke off. On returning to my chambers a quarter of an hour later, I found a continuation in the following words :—

‘ And that every man is too much inclined to behave himself like a
beast,
In spite of our glorious humanity, which requires neither God nor
priest,
Yet is daily praised and plastered by ten thousand fools at least—
Request Mr. Hughes’ presence at their jawshop in the East,
Which don’t they wish they may get it, for he goes out to-night to
feast
At the Rev. C. Kingsley’s rectory, Chelsea, where he’ll get his gullet
greased
With the best of Barto Valle’s port, and will have his joys increased
By meeting his old college chum, Macdougall the Borneo priest—
So come, you thief, and drop your brief,
At six o’clock without relief ;
And if you won’t may you come to grief,
Says Parson Lot the Socialist Chief,
Who signs his mark at the foot of the leaf—thus ’

and, at the end, a clenched fist was sketched in a few bold lines, and under it, ‘ Parson Lot, his mark ’ written.

I don’t know that I can do better than give the history of the rest of the day. Knowing his town habits well, I called at Parker, the publisher’s, after chambers, and found him there, sitting on a table and holding forth on politics to our excellent little friend, John Wm. Parker, the junior partner.

We started to walk down to Chelsea, and a dense fog came on before we had reached Hyde Park Corner. Both of us knew the way well ; but we lost it half a dozen times, and his spirit seemed to rise as the fog thickened. ‘ Isn’t this like life ? ’ he said, after one of our blunders : ‘ a deep yellow fog all round, with a dim light here and there shining through. You grope your way on from one lamp to another, and you go up wrong streets and back again ; but you get home at last—there’s always light enough for that.’ After a short pause he said, quite abruptly, ‘ Tom, do you want to live to be old ? ’

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I said I had never thought on the subject ; and he went on, 'I dread it more than I can say. To feel one's powers going, and to end in snuff and stink. Look at the last days of Scott, and Wordsworth, and Southey.' I suggested St. John. 'Yes,' he said, 'that's the right thing, and will do for Bunsen, and great, tranquil men like him. The longer they live the better for all. But for an eager, fiery nature like mine, with fierce passions eating one's life out, it won't do. If I live twenty years I know what will happen to me. The back of my brain will soften, and I shall most likely go blind.'

The Bishop got down somehow by six. The dinner did not last long, for the family were away, and afterwards we adjourned to the study, and Parson Lot rose to his best. He stood before the fire, while the Bishop and I took the two fireside arm-chairs, and poured himself out, on subject after subject, sometimes when much moved taking a tramp up and down the room, a long clay pipe in his right hand (at which he gave an occasional suck ; it was generally out, but he scarcely noticed it), and his left hand passed behind his back, clasping the right elbow. It was a favourite attitude with him, when he was at ease with his company.

We were both bent on drawing him out ; and the first topic, I think, raised by the Bishop was, Froude's history, then recently published. He took up the cudgels for Henry VIII., whom we accused of arbitrariness. Henry was not arbitrary ; arbitrary men are the most obstinate of men ? Why ? Because they are weak. The strongest men are always ready to hear reason and change their opinions, because the strong man knows that if he loses an opinion to-day he can get just as good a one to-morrow in its place. But the weak man holds on to his opinion, because he can't get another, and he knows it.

Soon afterwards he got upon trout-fishing, which was a strong bond of union between him and me, and discoursed on the proper methods of fishing chalk streams. 'Your flies can't be too big, but they must be on small gut, not on base viol fiddle-strings, like those you brought

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down to Farnham last year. I tell you gut is the thing that does it. Trout know that flies don't go about with a ring and a hand pole through their noses, like so many prize bulls of Lord Ducie's.'

Then he got on the possible effect of association on the future of England, and from that to the first International Exhibition, and the building which was going up in Hyde Park.

'I mean to run amuck soon,' he said, 'against all this talk about genius and high art, and the rest of it. It will be the ruin of us, as it has been of Germany. They have been for fifty years finding out, and showing people how to do everything in heaven and earth, and have done nothing. They are dead even yet, and will be till they get out of the high art fit. We were dead, and the French were dead till their revolution; but that brought us to life. Why didn't the Germans come to life too? Because they set to work with their arts, sciences, and how to do this, that, and the other thing, and doing nothing. Goethe was, in great part, the ruin of Germany. He was like a great fog coming down on the German people, and wrapping them up.'

Then he, in his turn, drew the Bishop about Borneo, and its people, and fauna and flora; and we got some delightful stories of apes, and converts, and honey bears, Kingsley showing himself, by his questions, as familiar with the Bornean plants and birds as though he had lived there. Later on we got him on his own works, and he told us how he wrote. 'I can't think, even on scientific subjects, except in the dramatic form. It is what Tom said to Harry, and what Harry answered him. I never put pen to paper till I have two or three pages in my head, and see them as if they were printed. Then I write them off, and take a turn in the garden, and so on again.' We wandered back to fishing, and I challenged his keenness for making a bag. 'Ah!' he said, 'that's all owing to my blessed habit of intensity, which has been my greatest help in life. I go at what I am about as if there was nothing else in the world for the time being. That's the secret of all hard-

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working men ; but most of them can't carry it into their amusements. Luckily for me I can stop from all work, at short notice, and turn head over heels in the sight of all creation, and say, I won't be good or bad, or wise, or anything, till two o'clock to-morrow.'

At last the Bishop would go, so we groped our way with him into the King's Road, and left him in charge of a link-boy. When we got back, I said something laughingly about his gift of talk, which had struck me more that evening than ever before.

'Yes,' he said, 'I have it all in me. I could be as great a talker as any man in England, but for my stammering. I know it well ; but it's a blessed thing for me. You must know, by this time, that I'm a very shy man, and shyness and vanity always go together. And so I think of what every fool will say of me, and can't help it. When a man's first thought is not whether a thing is right or wrong, but what will Lady A., or Mr. B. say about it, depend upon it he wants a thorn in the flesh, like my stammer. When I am speaking for God, in the pulpit, or praying by bedsides, I never stammer. My stammer is a blessed thing for me. It keeps me from talking in company, and from going out as much as I should do but for it.'

It was two o'clock before we thought of moving, and then, the fog being as bad as ever, he insisted on making me up a bed on the floor. While we were engaged in this process, he confided to me that he had heard of a doctor who was very successful in curing stammering, and was going to try him. I laughed, and reminded him of his thorn in the flesh, to which he replied, with a quaint twinkle of his eye, 'Well, that's true enough. But a man has no right to be a nuisance, if he can help it, and no more right to go about amongst his fellows stammering, than he has to go about stinking.'

At this time he was already at work on another novel ; and, in answer to a remonstrance from a friend, who was anxious that he should keep all his strength for social reform, writes :—

1851.—'I know that He has made me a parish priest,

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and that that is the duty which lies nearest me, and that I may seem to be leaving my calling in novel-writing. But has He not taught me all these very things *by my* parish priest life? Did He, too, let me become a strong, daring, sporting, wild man of the woods for nothing? Surely the education He has given me so different from that which authors generally receive, points out to me a peculiar calling to preach on these points from my own experience, as it did to good old Isaac Walton, as it has done in our own day to that truly noble man Captain Marryat. Therefore I must believe, "*si tu sequi la tua stella*," with Dante, that He who ordained my star will not lead me *into* temptation, but *through* it, as Maurice says. Without Him all places and methods of life are equally dangerous—with Him, all equally safe. Pray for me, for in myself I am weaker of purpose than a lost greyhound, lazier than a dog in rainy weather.'

While the co-operative movement was spreading in all directions, the same impulse was working amongst the trades unions, and the engineers had set the example of uniting all their branches into one society. In this winter they believed themselves strong enough to try conclusions with their employers. The great lock-out in January 1852 was the consequence. The engineers had appealed to the Council of Promoters to help them in putting their case—which had been much misrepresented—fairly before the public, and Kingsley had been consulted as the person best able to do it. He had declined to interfere, and wrote me the following letter to explain his views. It will show how far he was an encourager of violent measures or views.—

‘EVERSLEY, *January* 28, 1852.

‘You may have been surprised at my having taken no part in this Amalgamated Iron Trades’ matter. And I think that I am bound to say why I have not, and how far I wish my friends to interfere in it.

‘I do think that we, the Council of Promoters, shall not be wise in interfering between masters and men; because—I. I question whether the points at issue between

them can be fairly understood by any persons not conversant with the practical details of the trade. . . .

‘ 2. Nor do I think they have put their case as well as they might. For instance, if it be true that they themselves have invented many, or most, of the improvements in their tools and machinery, they have an argument in favour of keeping out unskilled labourers, which is unanswerable, and yet, that they have never used—viz. “Your masters make hundreds and thousands by these improvements, while we have no remuneration for this inventive talent of ours, but rather lose by it, because it makes the introduction of unskilled labour more easy. Therefore, the only way in which we can get anything like a payment for this inventive faculty of which we make you a present over and above our skilled labour, for which you bargained, is to demand that we, who invent the machines, if we cannot have a share in the profits of them, shall at least have the exclusive privilege of using them instead of their being, as now, turned against us.” That, I think, is a fair argument ; but I have seen nothing of it from any speaker or writer.

‘ 3. I think whatever battle is fought, must be fought by the men themselves. The present dodge of the Manchester School is to cry out against us, as Greg did. “These Christian Socialists are a set of mediæval parsons, who want to hinder the independence and self-help of the men, and bring them back to absolute feudal maxims ; and then, with the most absurd inconsistency, when we get up a corporation workshop, to let the men work on the very independence and self-help of which they talk so fine, they turn round and raise just the opposite yell and cry. The men can’t be independent of capitalists ; these associations will fail *because* the men are helping themselves”—showing that what they mean is, that the men shall be independent of every one but themselves—independent of legislators, parsons, advisers, gentlemen, noblemen, and every one that tries to help them by moral agents ; but the slaves of the capitalists, bound to them by a servitude increasing instead of lightening with their numbers. Now, the only way in

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which we can clear the cause of this calumny is to let the men fight their own battle ; to prevent any one saying, " These men are the tools of dreamers and fanatics," which would be just as ruinously blackening to them in the public eyes, as it would be to let the cry get abroad, " This is a Socialist movement, destructive of rights of property, communism, Louis Blanc, and the devil, etc." You know the infernal stuff which the devil gets up on such occasions—having no scruples about calling himself hard names, when it suits his purpose, to blind and frighten respectable old women.

' Moreover, these men are not poor distressed needle-women or slop-workers. They are the most intelligent and best educated workmen, receiving incomes often higher than a gentleman's son whose education has cost £1000, and if they can't fight their own battles, no men in England can, and the people are not ripe for association, and we must hark back into the competitive rot heap again. All, then, that we can do is, to give advice when asked—to see that they have, as far as we can get at them, a clear stage and no favour, but not by public, but by private influence.

' But we can help them in another way, by showing them the way to associate. That is quite a distinct question from their quarrel with their masters, and we shall be very foolish if we give the press a handle for mixing up the two. We have a right to say to masters, men, and public, " We know and care nothing about the iron strike. Here are a body of men coming to us, wishing to be shown how to do that which is a right thing for them to do—well or ill off, strike or no strike, namely, associate ; and we will help and teach them to do *that* to the very utmost of our power.'

' The Iron Workers' co-operative shops will be watched with lynx eyes, calumniated shamelessly. Our business will be to tell the truth about them, and fight manfully with our pens for them. But we shall never be able to get the ears of the respectabilities and the capitalists, if we appear at this stage of business. What we must say is, " If you are needy and enslaved, we

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will fight for you from pity, whether you be associated or competitive. But you are neither needy, nor, unless you choose, enslaved; and therefore we will only fight for you in proportion as you become associates. Do that, and see if we can't stand hard knocks for your sake."—Yours ever affectionate,
C. KINGSLEY.'

In the summer of 1852 (mainly by the continued exertions of the members of the Council, who had supplied Mr. Slaney's committee with all his evidence, and had worked hard in other ways for this object) a Bill for legalising Industrial Associations was about to be introduced into the House of Commons. It was supposed at one time that it would be taken in hand by the Government of Lord Derby, then lately come into office, and Kingsley had been canvassing a number of persons to make sure of its passing. On hearing that a Cabinet Minister would probably undertake it, he writes:—

'Let him be assured that he will by such a move do more to carry out true Conservatism, and to reconcile the workmen with the real aristocracy, than any politician for the last twenty years has done. The truth is, we are in a critical situation here in England. Not in one of danger—which is the vulgar material notion of a crisis, but at the crucial point, the point of departure of principles and parties which will hereafter become great and powerful. Old Whiggery is dead, old true blue Toryism of the Robert Inglis school is dead too—and in my eyes a great loss. But as live dogs are better than dead lions, let us see what the live dogs are.

'1. The Peelites, who will ultimately, be sure, absorb into themselves all the remains of Whiggery, and a very large proportion of the Conservative party. In an effete unbelieving age, like this, the Sadducee and the Herodian will be the most captivating philosopher. A scientific laziness, lukewarmness, and compromise, is a cheery theory for the young men of the day, and they will take to it *con amore*. I don't complain of Peel himself. He was a great man, but his method of compromise, though useful

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enough in particular cases when employed by a great man, becomes a most dastardly "*schema mundi*" when taken up by a school of little men. Therefore the only help which we can hope for from the Peelites is that they will serve as ballast and cooling pump to both parties, but their very trimming and moderation make them fearfully likely to obtain power. It depends on the wisdom of the present Government, whether they do or not.

'2. Next you have the Manchester School, from whom Heaven defend us ; for of all narrow, conceited, hypocritical, and anarchic and atheistic schemes of the universe, the Cobden and Bright one is exactly the worst. I have no language to express my contempt for it, and therefore I quote what Maurice wrote me this morning. "If the Ministry would have thrown Protection to the dogs (as I trust they have, in spite of the base attempts of the Corn Law Leaguers to goad them to committing themselves to it, and to hold them up as the people's enemies), and throw themselves into social measures, who would not have clung to them, to avert that horrible catastrophe of a Manchester ascendancy, which I believe in my soul would be fatal to intellect, morality, and freedom, and will be more likely to move a rebellion among the working men than any Tory rule which can be conceived."

'Of course it would. To pretend to be the workmen's friends, by keeping down the price of bread, when all they want thereby is to keep down wages and increase profits, and in the meantime to widen the gulf between the working man and all that is time-honoured, refined, and chivalrous in English society, that they may make the men their divided slaves, that is—perhaps half unconsciously, for there are excellent men amongst them—the game of the Manchester School.'

'I have never swerved from my one idea of the last seven years, that the real battle of the time is, if England is to be saved from anarchy and unbelief, and utter exhaustion caused by the competitive enslavement of the masses, not Radical or Whig against Peelite or Tory—let the dead bury their dead—but the Church, the

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gentlemen, and the workman, against the shopkeepers and the Manchester School. The battle could not have been fought forty years ago, because on one side the Church was an idle phantasm, the gentlemen too ignorant, the workman too merely animal ; while, on the other, the Manchester cotton-spinners were all Tories, and the shopkeepers were a distinct class interest from theirs. But now these two latter have united, and the sublime incarnation of shopkeeping and labour-buying in the cheapest market shines forth in the person of Moses and Son, and both cotton-spinners and shopkeepers say, " This is the man ! " and join in one common press to defend his system. Be it so : now we know our true enemies, and soon the working men will know them also. But if the present Ministry will not see the possibility of a coalition between them and the workmen, I see no alternative but just what we have been straining every nerve to keep off—a competitive United States, a democracy before which the work of ages will go down in a few years. A true democracy, such as you and I should wish to see, is impossible without a Church and a Queen, and, as I believe, without a gentry. On the conduct of statesmen it will depend whether we are gladly and harmoniously to develop England on her ancient foundations, or whether we are to have fresh paralytic governments succeeding each other in doing nothing, while the workmen and the Manchester School fight out the real questions of the day in ignorance and fury, till the "*culbute generale*" comes, and gentlemen of ancient family, like your humble servant, betake themselves to Canada, to escape, not the Amalgamated Engineers, but their "masters," and the slop-working savages whom their masters' system has created, and will by that time have multiplied tenfold.

'I have got a Thames boat on the lake at Bramshill, and am enjoying vigorous sculls. My answer to *Fraser* is just coming out ; spread it where you can.'

In the next year or two the first excitement about the co-operative movement cooled down. Parson Lot's pen was less needed, and he turned to other work in his own

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name. Of the richness and variety of that work this is not the place to speak, but it all bore on the great social problems which had occupied him in the earlier years. The Crimean war weighed on him like a nightmare, and modified some of his political opinions. On the resignation of Lord Aberdeen's Government on the motion for inquiry into the conduct of the war, he writes, February 5, 1855, 'It is a very bad job, and a very bad time, be sure, and with a laughing House of Commons we shall go to Gehenna, even if we are not there already—But one comfort is, that even Gehenna can burn nothing but the chaff and carcasses, so we shall be none the poorer in reality. So as the frost has broken gloriously, I wish you would get me a couple of dozen of good flies, viz. cock-a-bond-hues, red palmers with plenty of gold twist; winged duns, with bodies of hare's ear and yellow mohair mixed well; hackle duns with grey bodies, and a wee silver, these last tied as palmers, and the silver ribbed all the way down. If you could send them in a week I shall be very glad, as fishing begins early.'

In the midst of the war he was present one day at a Council meeting, after which the manager of one of the associations referring to threatened bread riots at Manchester, asked Kingsley's opinion as to what should be done. 'There never were but two ways,' he said, 'since the beginning of the world of dealing with a corn famine. One is to let the merchants buy it up and hold it as long as they can, as we do. And this answers the purpose best in the long run, for they will be selling corn six months hence when we shall want it more than we do now, and makes us provident against our wills. The other is Joseph's plan.' Here the manager broke in, 'Why didn't our Government step in, then, and buy largely, and store in public granaries?' 'Yes,' said Kingsley, 'and why ain't you and I flying about with wings and dewdrops hanging to our tails? Joseph's plan won't do for us. What minister would we trust with money enough to buy corn for the people, or power to buy where he chose?' And he went on to give his questioner a lecture in political

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economy, which the most orthodox opponent of the popular notions about Socialism would have applauded to the echo.

By the end of the year he had nearly finished *Westward Ho!*—the most popular of his novels, which the war had literally wrung out of him. He writes:—

[?] ‘December 18, 1855.

‘I am getting more of a Government man every day. I don’t see how they could have done better in any matter, because I don’t see but that *I* should have done a thousand times worse in their place, and that is the only fair standard.

‘As for a ballad—oh! my dear lad, there is no use fiddling while Rome is burning. I have nothing to sing about those glorious fellows, except “God save the Queen and them.” I tell you the whole thing stuns me, so I cannot sit down to make fiddle rhyme with diddle about it—or blundered with hundred like Alfred Tennyson. He is no Tyrtæus, though he has a glimpse of what Tyrtæus ought to be. But I have not even that; and am going rabbit-shooting to-morrow instead. But every man has his calling, and my novel is mine, because I am fit for nothing better. The book [*Westward Ho!*] will be out the middle or end of January, if the printers choose. It is a sanguinary book, but perhaps containing doctrine profitable for these times. My only pain is that I have been forced to sketch poor Paddy as a very worthless fellow then, while just now he is turning out a hero. I have made the deliberate *amende honorable* in a note.’

Then, referring to some criticism of mine on *Westward Ho!*—‘I suppose you are right as to Amyas and his mother; I will see to it. You are probably right too about John Hawkins. The letter in Purchas is to me unknown, but your conception agrees with a picture my father says he has seen of Captain John (he thinks at Lord Anglesey’s, at Beaudesert) as a prim, hard, terrier-faced, little fellow, with a sharp chin, and a dogged Puritan eye. So perhaps I am wrong: but I don’t think *that* very important, for there must have been sea-dogs of

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my stamp in plenty too.' Then, referring to the Crimean war—'I don't say that the two cases are parallel. I don't ask England to hate Russia as she was bound to hate Spain, as God's enemy; but I do think that a little Tudor pluck and Tudor democracy (paradoxical as the word may seem, and inconsistently as it was carried out then) is just what we want now.'

'Tummas! Have you read the story of Abou Zennab his horse, in Stanley's *Sinai*, p. 67? What a myth! What a poem old Wordsworth would have writ thereon! If I didn't cry like a babby over it. What a brick of a horse he must have been, and what a brick of an old head-splitter Abou Zennab must have been, to have his commandments kept unto this day concerning of his horse; and no one to know who he was, nor when, nor how, nor nothing. I wonder if anybody'll keep *our* commandments after we be gone, much less say, "Eat, eat, O horse of Abou Kingsley!"'

By this time the success of *Westward Ho!* and *Hypatia* had placed him in the first rank of English writers. His fame as an author, and his character as a man, had gained him a position which might well have turned any man's head. There were those amongst his intimate friends who feared that it might be so with him, and who were faithful enough to tell him so. And I cannot conclude this sketch better than by giving his answer to that one of them with whom he had been most closely associated in the time when, as Parson Lot, every man's hand had been against him—

'MY DEAR LUDLOW,

'And for this fame, etc.,

'I know a little of her worth.

'And I will tell you what I know.

'That, in the first place, she is a fact, and as such, it is not wise to ignore her, but at least to walk once round her, and see her back as well as her front.

'The case to me seems to be this. A man feels in himself the love of praise. Every man does who is not a

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brute. It is a universal human faculty ; Carlyle nicknames it the sixth sense. Who made it ? God or the devil ? Is it flesh or spirit ? a difficult question ; because tamed animals grow to possess it in a high degree ; and our metaphysician does not yet allow them spirit. But, whichever it be, it cannot be for bad : only bad when misdirected, and not controlled by reason, the faculty which judges between good and evil. Else why has God put His love of praise into the heart of every child which is born into the world, and entwined it into the holiest filial and family affections, as the earliest mainspring of good actions ? Has God appointed that every child shall be fed first with a necessary lie, and afterwards come to the knowledge of your supposed truth, that the praise of God alone is to be sought ? Or are we to believe that the child is intended to be taught as delicately and gradually as possible the painful fact, that the praise of all men is not equally worth having, and to use his critical faculty to discern the praise of good men from the praise of bad, to seek the former and despise the latter ? I should say that the last was the more reasonable. And this I will say, that if you bring up any child to care nothing for the praise of its parents, its elders, its pastors, and masters, you may make a fanatic of it, or a shameless cynic : but you will neither make it a man, an Englishman, nor a Christian.

‘ But “ our Lord’s words stand, about not seeking the honour which comes from men, but the honour which comes from God only ! ” True, they do stand, and our Lord’s fact stands also, the fact that He has created every child to be educated by an honour which comes from his parents and elders. Both are true. Here, as in most spiritual things, to have an antinomia, an apparent contradiction, which nothing but the Gospel solves. And it does solve it ; and your one-sided view of the text resolves itself into just the same fallacy as the old ascetic one. “ We must love God alone, therefore we must love no created thing. ” To which St. John answers pertinently, “ He who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ? ” If

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you love your brethren, you love Christ in them. If you love their praise, you love the praise of Christ in them. For consider this, you cannot deny that, if one loves any person, one desires that person's esteem. But we are bound to love all men, and that is our highest state. Therefore, in our highest state, we shall desire all men's esteem. Paradoxical, but true. If we believe in Christmas-day; if we believe in Whitsunday, we shall believe that Christ is in all men, that God's spirit is abroad in the earth, and therefore the dispraise, misunderstanding, and calumny of men will be exquisitely painful to us, and ought to be so; and, on the other hand, the esteem of men, and renown among men for doing good deeds will be inexpressibly precious to us. They will be signs and warrants to us that God is pleased with us, that we are sharing in that "honour and glory" which Paul promises again and again, with no such scruples as yours, to those who lead heroic lives. We shall not neglect the voice of God within us; but we shall remember that there is also a voice of God without us, which we must listen to; and that in a Christian land, *vox populi*, patiently and discriminately listened to, is sure to be found not far off from the *vox Dei*.

'Now, let me seriously urge this last fact on you. Of course, in listening to the voice of the man outside there is a danger, as there is in the use of any faculty. You may employ it, according to Divine reason and grace, for ennobling and righteous purposes; or you may degrade it to carnal and selfish ones; so you may degrade the love of praise into vanity, into longing for the honour which comes from men, by pandering to their passions and opinions, by using your powers as they would too often like to use theirs, for mere self-aggrandisement, by saying in your heart—*quam pulchrum digito monstrari et dici hic est*. That is the man who wrote the fine poem, who painted the fine picture, and so forth, till, by giving way to this, a man may give way to forms of vanity as base as the red Indian who sticks a fox's tail on, and dances about boasting of his brute cunning. I know all about

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that, as well as any poor son of Adam ever did. But I know, too, that to desire the esteem of as many rational men as possible ; in a word, to desire an honourable and true renown for having done good in my generation, has nothing to do with that ; and the more I fear and struggle against the former, the more I see the exceeding beauty and divineness, and everlasting glory of the latter as an entrance into the communion of saints.

‘Of course, all this depends on whether we do believe that Christ is in every man, and that God’s spirit is abroad in the earth. Of course, again, it will be very difficult to know who speaks by God’s spirit, and who sees by Christ’s light in him ; but surely the wiser, the humbler path, is to give men credit for as much wisdom and rightness as possible, and to believe that when one is found fault with, one is probably in the wrong. For myself, on looking back, I see clearly with shame and sorrow, that the obloquy which I have brought often on myself and on the good cause, has been almost all of it my own fault—that I have given the devil and bad men a handle, not by caring what people would say, but by *not caring*—by fancying that I was a very grand fellow, who was going to speak what I knew to be true, in spite of all fools (and really did and do intend so to do), while all the while I was deceiving myself, and unaware of a canker at the heart the very opposite to the one against which you warn me. I mean the proud, self-willed, self-conceited spirit which made no allowance for other men’s weakness or ignorance ; nor again, for their superior experience and wisdom on points which I have never considered—which took a pride in shocking and startling, and defying, and hitting as hard as I could, and fancied, blasphemously, as I think, that the word of God had come to me only, and went out from me only. God forgive me for these sins, as well as for my sins in the opposite direction ; but for these sins especially, because I see them to be darker and more dangerous than the others.

‘For there has been gradually revealed to me (what my many readings in the lives of fanatics and ascetics

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ought to have taught me long before), that there is a terrible gulf ahead of that not caring what men say. Of course it is a feeling on which the spirit must fall back in hours of need, and cry, "Thou, God, knowest mine integrity. I have believed, and therefore I will speak ; Thou art true, though all men be liars !" But I am convinced that that is a frame in which no man can live, or is meant to live ; that it is only to be resorted to in fear and trembling, after deepest self-examination, and self-purification, and earnest prayer. For otherwise, Ludlow, a man gets to forget that voice of God without him, in his determination to listen to nothing but the voice of God within him, and so he falls into two dangers. He forgets that there *is* a voice of God without him. He loses trust in, and charity to, and reverence for his fellow-men ; he learns to despise, deny, and quench the Spirit, and to despise prophesyings, and so becomes gradually cynical, sectarian, fanatical.

‘ And then comes a second and worse danger. Crushed into self, and his own conscience and *schema mundi*, he loses the opportunity of correcting his impression of the voice of God within, by the testimony of the voice of God without ; and so he begins to mistake more and more the voice of that very flesh of his, which he fancies he has conquered, for the voice of God, and to become, without knowing it, an auto-theist. And out of that springs eclecticism, absence of tenderness *for* men, for want of sympathy *with* men ; as he makes his own conscience his standard for God, so he makes his own character the standard for men ; and so he becomes narrow, hard, and if he be a man of strong will and feelings, often very inhuman and cruel. This is the history of thousands—of Jeromes, Lauds, Puritans who scourged Quakers, Quakers who cursed Puritans ; nonjurors, who, though they would die rather than offend their own conscience in owning William, would plot with James to murder William, or to devastate England with Irish Rapparees and Auvergne dragoons. This, in fact, is the spiritual diagnosis of those many pious persecutors, who though neither hypo-

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crites nor blackguards themselves, have used both as instruments of their fanaticism.

‘Against this I have to guard myself, you little know how much, and to guard my children still more, brought up, as they will be, under a father, who, deeply discontented with the present generation, cannot but express that discontent at times. To make my children “*banausoi*,” insolent and scoffing radicals, believing in nobody and nothing but themselves, would be perfectly easy in me if I were to make the watchword of my house, “Never mind what people say.” On the contrary, I shall teach them that there are plenty of good people in the world; that public opinion has pretty surely an undercurrent of the water of life, below all its froth and garbage: and that in a Christian country like this, where, with all faults, a man (sooner or later) has fair play and a fair hearing, the esteem of good men, and the blessings of the poor, will be a pretty sure sign that they have the blessing of God also; and I shall tell them, when they grow older, that ere they feel called on to become martyrs, in defending the light within them against all the world, they must first have taken care most patiently, and with all self-distrust and humility, to make full use of the light which is around them, and has been here for ages before them, and would be here still, though they had never been born or thought of. The antinomy between this and their own conscience may be painful enough to them some day. To what thinking man is it not a life-long battle? but I shall not dream that by denying one pole of the antinomy I can solve it, or do anything but make them, by cynicism or fanaticism, bury their talent in the earth, and *not* do the work which God has given them to do, because they will act like a parson who, before beginning his sermon, should first kick his congregation out of doors, and turn the key; and not like St. Paul, who became all things to all men, if by any means he might save some.

‘Yours ever affectionately, with all Christmas blessings,

‘C. KINGSLEY.

‘FARLY COURT, *December 1855.*’

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‘I should be very much obliged to you to show this letter to Maurice.’

One more letter only I will add, dated about the end of the ‘Parson Lot’ period. He had written to inform me that one of the old Chartist leaders, a very worthy fellow, was in great distress, and to ask me to do what I could for him. In my reply I had alluded somewhat bitterly to the apparent failure of the Association movement in London, and to some of our blunders, acknowledging how he had often seen the weak places, and warned us against them. His answer came by return of post :—

‘EVERSLEY, May 1856.

‘DEAR TOM—It’s an ill bird that fouls its own nest ; and don’t cry stinking fish, neither don’t hollow till you’re out of the wood—which you oughtn’t to have called yourself Tom fool, and blasphemed the holy name thereby, till you knowed you was sich, which you wasn’t, as appears by particulars. And I have heard from T—— twice to-day, and he is agreeable, which, if he wasn’t, he is an ass, and don’t know half a loaf is better than no bread, and you musn’t look a gift horse in the mouth, but all is as right as a dog-fox down wind and vi. *millia passuum* to the next gorse. But this £25 of his is a grueller, and I learnt with interest that you are inclined to get the fish’s nose out of the weed. I have offered to lend him £10—hopes it may be lending—and have written a desperate begging letter to R. Monckton Milnes, Esq., which ’evins prosper. Poor T—— says to-night that he has written to Forster about it—which he must have the small of his back very hard against the ropes so to do, so the sooner we get the ginger-beer bottle out the longer he’ll fight, or else he’ll throw up the sponge at once ; for I know his pride. I think we can raise it somehow. I have a last card in old ——, the judge who tried and condemned him, and is the dearest old soul alive, only he will have it T—— showed dunghill, and don’t carry a real game hackle. If I am to tackle he you must send me back those letters

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to appeal to his piety and "joys as does abound," as your incomparable father remarks. When *will* you give me that canticle? He says Tom Taylor (I believe all the world is called Thomas) has behaved to him like a brother, which, indeed, was to be expexed, and has promised him copying at a shilling an hour, and *will* give him a chop daily free gracious; but the landlord won't wait, which we musn't neither.

'Now, business afore pleasure. You are an old darling, and who says no, I'd kick him, if it warn't for my cloth; but you are green in cottoning to me about our '48 mess. Because why? I lost nothing—I risked nothing. You fellows worked like bricks, spent money, and got midshipman's half-pay (nothing a-day and find yourself), and monkey's allowance (more kicks than half-pence). I risked no money; 'cause why, I had none; but *made* money out of the movement, and fame too. I've often thought what a dirty beast I was. I made £150 by *Alton Locke*, and never lost a farthing; and I got, not in spite of, but by the rows, a name and a standing with many a one who would never have heard of me otherwise, and I should have been a stercoraceous mendicant if I had hollowed when I got a facer, while I was winning by the cross, though I didn't mean to fight one. No. And if I'd had £100,000, I'd have, and should have, staked and lost it all in 1848-50. I should, Tom, for my heart was and is in it, and you'll see it will beat yet; but we ain't the boys. We don't see but half the bull's eye yet, and don't see *at all* the policeman which is a-going on his beat behind the bull's eye, and no thanks to us. Still *some* somedever, it's in the fates, that Association is the pure caseine, and must be eaten by the human race if it would save its soul alive, which, indeed, it will; only don't you think me a good fellow for not crying out, when I never had more to do than scratch myself and away went the fleas. But you all were real bricks; and if you were riled, why let him that is without sin cast the first stone, or let me cast it for him, and see if I don't hit him in the eye.

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‘ Now to business ; I have had a sorter kinder sample day. Up at 5, to see a dying man ; ought to have been up at 2, but Ben King the rat-catcher, who came to call me, was taken nervous !!! and didn’t make row enough ; was from 5.30 to 6.30 with the most dreadful case of agony—insensible to me, but not to his pain. Came home, got a wash and a pipe, and again to him at 8. Found him insensible to his own pain, with dilated pupils, dying of pressure of the brain—going any moment. Prayed the commendatory prayers over him, and started for the river with West. Fished all the morning in a roaring N.E. gale, with the dreadful agonised face between me and the river, pondering on THE mystery. Killed eight on “ March brown ” and “ governor,” by drowning the flies, and taking *’em out gently to see* if aught was there—which is the only dodge in a north-easter. ‘ Cause why ? The water is warmer than the air—*ergo*, fishes don’t like to put their noses out o’ doors, and feeds at home downstairs. It is the only wrinkle, Tom. The captain fished a-top, and caught but three all day. They weren’t going to catch a cold in their heads to please him or any man. Clouds burn up at 1 P.M. I put on a minnow, and kill three more ; I should have had lots, but for the image of the dirty hickory stick, which would “ walk the waters like a thing of life,” just ahead of my minnow. Mem.—Never fish with the sun in your back ; it’s bad enough with a fly, but with a minnow it’s strychnine and prussic acid. My eleven weighed together four and a half pounds—three to the pound ; not good, considering I had passed many a two-pound fish, I *know*.

‘ Corollary.—Brass minnow don’t suit the water. Where is your wonderful minnow ? Send him me down, or else a *horn* one, which I believes in desperate ; but send me something before Tuesday, and I will send you P.O.O. Horn minnow looks like a gudgeon, which is the pure caseine. One pounder I caught to-day on the “ March brown ” womited his wittles, which was rude, but instructive ; and among worms was a gudgeon three inches long and more. Blow minnows—gudgeon is the thing.

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‘Came off the water at 3. Found my man alive, and, thank God, quiet. Sat with him, and thought him going once or twice. What a mystery that long, insensible death-struggle is! Why should they be so long about it! Then had to go to Hartley Row for an Archdeacon’s Sunday-school meeting—three hours’ useless (I fear) speechifying and “shop”; but the Archdeacon is a good man, and works like a brick beyond his office. Got back at 10.30, and sit writing to you. So goes one’s day. All manner of incongruous things to do—and the very incongruity keeps one beany and jolly. Your letter was delightful. I read part of it to West, who says, you are the best fellow on earth, to which I agree.

‘So no more from your sleepy and tired—

‘C. KINGSLEY.’

This was almost the last letter I ever received from him in the Parson Lot period of his life, with which alone this notice has to do. It shows, I think, very clearly that it was not that he had deserted his flag (as has been said) or changed his mind about the cause for which he had fought so hard and so well. His heart was in it still as warmly as ever, as he says himself. But the battle had rolled away to another part of the field. Almost all that Parson Lot had ever striven for was already gained. The working classes had already got statutory protection for their trade associations, and their unions, though still outside the law, had become strong enough to fight their own battles. And so he laid aside his fighting name and his fighting pen, and had leisure to look calmly on the great struggle more as a spectator than an actor.

A few months later, in the summer of 1856, when he and I were talking over and preparing for a week’s fishing in the streams and lakes of his favourite Snowdonia, he spoke long and earnestly in the same key. I well remember how he wound it all up with, ‘The long and short of it is, I am becoming an optimist. All men, worth anything, old men especially, have strong fits of optimism—even Carlyle has—because they can’t help

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hoping, and sometimes feeling, that the world is going right, and will go right, not your way, or my way, but its own way. Yes ; we've all tried our Holloway's Pills, Tom, to cure all the ills of all the world—and we've all found out I hope by this time that the tough old world has more in its inside than any Holloway's Pills will clear out.' A few weeks later I received the following invitation to Snowdon, and to Snowdon we went in the autumn of 1856 :—

THE INVITATION

COME away with me, Tom,
Term and talk is done ;
My poor lads are reaping,
Busy every one.
Curates mind the parish,
Sweepers mind the Court,
We'll away to Snowdon
For our ten days' sport,
Fish the August evening
Till the eve is past,
Whoop like boys at pounders
Fairly played and grassed.
When they cease to dimple,
Lunge, and swerve, and leap,
Then up over Siabod
Choose our nest, and sleep.
Up a thousand feet, Tom,
Round the lion's head,
Find soft stones to leeward
And make up our bed.
Eat our bread and bacon,
Smoke the pipe of peace,
And, ere we be drowsy,
Give our boots a grease.
Homer's heroes did so,
Why not such as we ?
What are sheets and servants ?
Superfluity.
Pray for wives and children
Safe in slumber curled,
Then to chat till midnight
O'er this babbling world.
Of the workmen's college,
Of the price of grain,

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Of the tree of knowledge,
Of the chance of rain ;
If Sir A. goes Romeward,
If Miss B. sings true,
If the fleet comes homeward,
If the mare will do,—
Anything and everything—
Up there in the sky
Angels understand us,
And no '*saints*' are by.
Down, and bathe at day-dawn,
Tramp from lake to lake,
Washing brain and heart clean
Every step we take.
Leave to Robert Browning
Beggars, fleas, and vines ;
Leave to mournful Ruskin
Popish Apennines,
Dirty Stones of Venice
And his Gas-lamps Seven ;
We've the stones of Snowdon
And the lamps of heaven.
Where's the mighty credit
In admiring Alps ?
Any goose sees '*glory*'
In their '*snowy scalps.*'
Leave such signs and wonders
For the dullard brain,
As æsthetic brandy,
Opium and cayenne ;
Give me Bramshill common
(St. John's harriers by),
Or the vale of Windsor,
England's golden eye.
Show me life and progress,
Beauty, health, and man ;
Houses fair, trim gardens,
Turn where'er I can.
Or, if bored with '*High Art,*'
And such popish stuff,
One's poor ears need airing,
Snowdon's high enough,
While we find God's signet
Fresh on English ground,
Why go gallivanting
With the nations round ?
Though we try no ventures
Desperate or strange ;

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Feed on commonplaces
In a narrow range ;
Never sought for Franklin
Round the frozen Capes ;
Even, with Macdougall,
Bagged our brace of apes ;
Never had our chance, Tom,
In that black Redan ;
Can't avenge poor Brereton
Out in Sakarran ;
Tho' we earn our bread, Tom,
By the dirty pen,
What we can we will be,
Honest Englishmen.
Do the work that's nearest,
Though it's dull at times ;
Helping, when we meet them,
Lame dogs over stiles ;
See in every hedgerow
Marks of angels' feet,
Epics in each pebble
Underneath our feet ;
Once a year, like schoolboys
Robin-Hooding go,
Leaving fops and fogies
A thousand feet below.

T. H.

CHEAP CLOTHES AND NASTY

KING RYENCE, says the legend of Prince Arthur, wore a paletot trimmed with kings' beards. In the first French Revolution (so Carlyle assures us) there were at Meudon tanneries of human skins. Mammon, at once tyrant and revolutionary, follows both these noble examples—in a more respectable way, doubtless, for Mammon hates cruelty; bodily pain is his devil—the worst evil which he, in his effeminacy, can conceive. So he shrieks benevolently when a drunken soldier is flogged; but he trims his paletots, and adorns his legs, with the flesh of men and the skins of women, with degradation, pestilence, heathendom, and despair; and then chuckles self-complacently over the smallness of his tailors' bills. Hypocrite!—straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel! What is flogging, or hanging, King Ryence's paletot or the tanneries of Meudon, to the slavery, starvation, waste of life, year-long imprisonment in dungeons narrower and fouler than those of the Inquisition, which goes on among thousands of free English clothes-makers at this day?

'The man is mad,' says Mammon, smiling supercilious pity. Yes, Mammon; mad as Paul before Festus; and for much the same reason, too. Much learning has made us mad. From two articles in the *Morning Chronicle* of Friday, Dec. 14th, and Tuesday, Dec. 18th, on the Condition of the Working Tailors, we learnt too much to leave us altogether masters of ourselves. But there is method in our madness; we can give reasons for it—satisfactory to ourselves, perhaps also to Him who made us, and you, and all tailors likewise. Will you, freshly

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bedizened, you and your footmen, from Nebuchadnezzar and Co.'s 'Emporium of Fashion,' hear a little about how your finery is made? You are always calling out for facts, and have a firm belief in salvation by statistics. Listen to a few.

The Metropolitan Commissioner of the *Morning Chronicle* called two meetings of the Working Tailors, one in Shadwell, and the other at the Hanover Square Rooms, in order to ascertain their condition from their own lips. Both meetings were crowded. At the Hanover Square Rooms there were more than one thousand men; they were altogether unanimous in their descriptions of the misery and slavery which they endured. It appears that there are two distinct tailor trades—the 'honourable' trade, now almost confined to the West End, and rapidly dying out there, and the 'dishonourable' trade of the show-shops and slop-shops—the plate-glass palaces, where gents—and, alas! those who would be indignant at that name—buy their cheap-and-nasty clothes. The two names are the tailors' own slang; slang is true and expressive enough, though, now and then. The honourable shops in the West End number only sixty; the dishonourable, four hundred and more; while at the East End the dishonourable trade has it all its own way. The honourable part of the trade is declining at the rate of one hundred and fifty journeymen per year; the dishonourable increasing at such a rate that, in twenty years it will have absorbed the whole tailoring trade, which employs upwards of twenty-one thousand journeymen. At the honourable shops the work is done, as it was universally thirty years ago, on the premises and at good wages. In the dishonourable trade, the work is taken home by the men, to be done at the very lowest possible prices, which decrease year by year, almost month by month. At the honourable shops, from 36s. to 24s. is paid for a piece of work for which the dishonourable shop pays from 22s. to 9s. But not to the workmen; happy is he if he really gets two-thirds, or half of that. For at the honourable shops, the master deals directly with his workmen; while at the

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dishonourable ones, the greater part of the work, if not the whole, is let out to contractors, or middle-men—‘sweaters,’ as their victims significantly call them—who, in their turn, let it out again, sometimes to the workmen, sometimes to fresh middle-men ; so that out of the price paid for labour on each article, not only the workmen, but the sweater, and perhaps the sweater’s sweater, and a third, and a fourth, and a fifth, have to draw their profit. And when the labour price has been already beaten down to the lowest possible, how much remains for the workmen after all these deductions, let the poor fellows themselves say !

One working tailor (at the Hanover Square Rooms Meeting) ‘mentioned a number of shops, both at the East and West Ends, whose work was all taken by sweaters ; and several of these shops were under royal and noble patronage. There was one notorious sweater who kept his carriage. He was a Jew, and, of course, he gave a preference to his own sect. Thus, another Jew received it from him second hand and at a lower rate ; then it went to a third—till it came to the unfortunate Christian at perhaps the eighth rate, and he performed the work at barely living prices ; this same Jew required a deposit of £5 in money before he would give out a single garment to be made. He need not describe the misery which this system entailed upon the workmen. It was well known, but it was almost impossible, except for those who had been at the two, to form an idea of the difference between the present meeting and one at the East End, where all who attended worked for slop-shops and sweaters. The present was a highly respectable assembly ; the other presented no other appearance but those of misery and degradation.’

Another says—‘We have all worked in the honourable trade, so we know the regular prices from our own personal experience. Taking the bad work with the good work we might earn 11s. a week upon an average. Sometimes we do earn as much as 15s. ; but, to do this, we are obliged to take part of our work home to our

wives and daughters. We are not always fully employed. We are nearly half our time idle. Hence, our earnings are, upon an average throughout the year, not more than 5s. 6d. a week.' 'Very often I have made only 3s. 4d. in the week,' said one. 'That's common enough with us all, I can assure you,' said another. 'Last week my wages was 7s. 6d.,' declared one. 'I earned 6s. 4d.,' exclaimed the second. 'My wages came to 9s. 2d. The week before I got 6s. 3d.' 'I made 7s. 9d.,' and 'I 7s. or 8s., I can't exactly remember which.' 'This is what we term the best part of our winter season. The reason why we are so long idle is because more hands than are wanted are kept on the premises, so that in case of a press of work coming in, our employers can have it done immediately. Under the day work system no master tailor had more men on the premises than he could keep continually going; but since the change to the piece-work system, masters made a practice of engaging double the quantity of hands that they have any need for, so that an order may be executed "at the shortest possible notice," if requisite. A man must not leave the premises when unemployed,—if he does, he loses his chance of work coming in. I have been there four days together, and had not a stitch of work to do.' 'Yes; that is common enough.' 'Ay, and then you're told, if you complain, you can go, if you don't like it. I am sure twelve hands would do all they have done at home, and yet they keep forty of us. It's generally remarked that, however strong and healthy a man may be when he goes to work at that shop, in a month's time he'll be a complete shadow, and have almost all his clothes in pawn. By Sunday morning, he has no money at all left, and he has to subsist till the following Saturday upon about a pint of weak tea, and four slices of bread and butter per day!!!'

'Another of the reasons for the sweaters keeping more hands than they want is, the men generally have their meals with them. The more men they have with them the more breakfasts and teas they supply, and the more profit they make. The men usually have to pay 4d.,

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and very often 5d. for their breakfast, and the same for their tea. The tea or breakfast is mostly a pint of tea or coffee, and three to four slices of bread and butter. *I worked for one sweater who almost starved the men; the smallest eater there would not have had enough if he had got three times as much. They had only three thin slices of bread and butter, not sufficient for a child, and the tea was both weak and bad. The whole meal could not have stood him in 2d. a head, and what made it worse was, that the men who worked there couldn't afford to have dinners, so that they were starved to the bone.* The sweater's men generally lodge where they work. A sweater usually keeps about six men. These occupy two small garrets; one room is called the kitchen, and the other the workshop; and here the whole of the six men, and the sweater, his wife, and family, live and sleep. One sweater *I worked with had four children and six men, and they, together with his wife, sister-in-law, and himself, all lived in two rooms, the largest of which was about eight feet by ten. We worked in the smallest room and slept there as well—all six of us. There were two turn-up beds in it, and we slept three in a bed. There was no chimney, and indeed, no ventilation whatever. I was near losing my life there—the foul air of so many people working all day in the place, and sleeping there at night, was quite suffocating. Almost all the men were consumptive, and I myself attended the dispensary for disease of the lungs. The room in which we all slept was not more than six feet square. We were all sick and weak, and loth to work.* Each of the six of us paid 2s. 6d. a week for our lodging, or 15s. altogether, and I am sure such a room as we slept and worked in might be had for 1s. a week; you can get a room with a fireplace for 1s. 6d. a week. The usual sum that the men working for sweaters pay for their tea, breakfasts, and lodging is 6s. 6d. to 7s. a week, and they seldom earn more money in the week. Occasionally at the week's end they are in debt to the sweater. This is seldom for more than 6d., for the sweater will not give them victuals if he has no work for them to do. Many who live and work at

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the sweater's are married men, and are obliged to keep their wives and children in lodgings by themselves. Some send them to the workhouse, others to their friends in the country. Besides the profit of the board and lodging, the sweater takes 6d. out of the price paid for every garment under 10s. ; some take 1s., and I do know of one who takes as much as 2s. This man works for a large show-shop at the West End. The usual profit of the sweater, over and above the board and lodging, is 2s. out of every pound. Those who work for sweaters soon lose their clothes, and are unable to seek for other work, because they have not a coat to their back to go and seek it in. *Last week, I worked with another man at a coat for one of Her Majesty's ministers, and my partner never broke his fast while he was making his half of it.* The minister dealt at a cheap West End show-shop. All the workman had the whole day and a half he was making the coat was a little tea. But sweaters' work is not so bad as Government work after all. At that, we cannot make more than 4s. or 5s. a week altogether—that is, counting the time we are running after it, of course. *Government contract work is the worst of all, and the starved-out and sweated-out tailor's last resource.* But still, Government does not do the regular trade so much harm as the cheap show and slop-shops. These houses have ruined thousands. They have cut down the prices, so that men cannot live at the work ; and the masters who did and would pay better wages, are reducing the workmen's pay every day. They say they must either compete with the large show-shops or go into the *Gazette*.'

Sweet competition ! Heavenly maid !—Nowadays hymned alike by penny-a-liners and philosophers as the ground of all society—the only real preserver of the earth ! Why not of Heaven, too ? Perhaps there is competition among the angels, and Gabriel and Raphael have won their rank by doing the maximum of worship on the minimum of grace ? We shall know some day. In the meanwhile, 'these are thy works, thou parent of all good !' Man eating man, eaten by man, in every variety of degree and

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method ! why does not some enthusiastic political economist write an epic on 'The Consecration of Cannibalism' ?

But if any one finds it pleasant to his soul to believe the poor journeymen's statements exaggerated, let him listen to one of the sweaters themselves :—

'I wish,' says he, 'that others did for the men as decently as I do. I know there are many who are living entirely upon them. Some employ as many as fourteen men. I myself worked in the house of a man who did this. The chief part of us lived, and worked, and slept together in two rooms, on the second floor. They charged 2s. 6d. per head for the lodging alone. Twelve of the workmen, I am sure, lodged in the house, and these paid altogether 30s. a week rent to the sweater. I should think the sweater paid 8s. a week for the rooms—so that he gained at least 22s. clear out of the lodging of these men, and stood at no rent himself. For the living of the men he charged—5d. for breakfasts, and the same for teas, and 8d. for dinner—or at the rate of 10s. 6d. each per head. Taking one with the other, and considering the manner in which they lived, I am certain that the cost for keeping each of them could not have been more than 5s. This would leave 5s. 6d. clear profit on the board of each of the twelve men, or, altogether, £3 : 6s. per week ; and this, added to the £1 : 2s. profit on the rent, would give £4 : 8s. for the sweater's gross profit on the board and lodging of the workmen in his place. But, besides this, he got 1s. out of each coat made on his premises, and there were twenty-one coats made there, upon an average, every week ; so that, altogether, the sweater's clear gains out of the men were £5 : 9s. every week. Each man made about a coat and a half in the course of the seven days (*for they all worked on a Sunday—they were generally told to "borrow a day off the Lord"*). For this coat and a half each hand got £1 : 2 : 6, and out of it he had to pay 13s. for board and lodging ; so that there was 9s. 6d. clear left. These are the profits of the sweater, and the earnings of the men engaged under him, when working for the first-rate houses. But many of the

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cheap houses pay as low as 8s. for the making of each dress and frock coat, and some of them as low as 6s. Hence the earnings of the men at such work would be from 9s. to 12s. per week, and the cost of their board and lodging without dinners, for these they seldom have, would be from 7s. 6d. to 8s. per week. Indeed, the men working under sweaters at such prices generally consider themselves well off if they have a shilling or two in their pockets for Sunday. The profits of the sweater, however, would be from £4 to £5 out of twelve men, working on his premises. The usual number of men working under each sweater is about six individuals; and the average rate of profit about £2 : 10s., without the sweater doing any work himself. It is very often the case that a man working under a sweater is obliged to pawn his own coat to get any pocket-money that he may require. Over and over again the sweater makes out that he is in his debt from 1s. to 2s. at the end of the week, and when the man's coat is in pledge, he is compelled to remain imprisoned in the sweater's lodgings for months together. In some sweating places, there is an old coat kept called a 'reliever,' and this is borrowed by such men as have none of their own to go out in. There are very few of the sweaters' men who have a coat to their backs or a shoe to their feet to come out into the streets on Sunday. Down about Fulwood's Rents, Holborn, I am sure I would not give 6d. for the clothes that are on a dozen of them; and it is surprising to me, working and living together in such numbers and in such small close rooms, in narrow close back courts as they do, that they are not all swept off by some pestilence. I myself have seen half a dozen men at work in a room that was a little better than a bedstead long. It was as much as one could do to move between the wall and the bedstead when it was down. There were two bedsteads in this room, and they nearly filled the place when they were down. The ceiling was so low, that I couldn't stand upright in the room. There was no ventilation in the place. There was no fireplace, and only a small window. When the window was open,

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you could nearly touch the houses at the back, and if the room had not been at the top of the house, the men could not have seen at all in the place. The staircase was so narrow, steep, and dark, that it was difficult to grope your way to the top of the house—it was like going up a steeple. This is the usual kind of place in which the sweater's men are lodged. The reason why there are so many Irishmen working for the sweaters is, because they are seduced over to this country by the prospect of high wages and plenty of work. They are brought over by the Cork boats at 10s. a head, and when they once get here, the prices they receive are so small that they are unable to go back. In less than a week after they get here, their clothes are all pledged, and they are obliged to continue working under the sweaters.

'The extent to which this system of "street kidnapping" is carried on is frightful. Young tailors, fresh from the country, are decoyed by the sweaters' wives into their miserable dens, under extravagant promises of employment, to find themselves deceived, imprisoned, and starved, often unable to make their escape for months—perhaps years; and then only fleeing from one dungeon to another as abominable.'

In the meantime, the profits of the beasts of prey who live on these poor fellows—both masters and sweaters—seem as prodigious as their cruelty.

Hear another working tailor on this point:—'In 1844 I belonged to the honourable part of the trade. Our house of call supplied the present show-shop with men to work on the premises. The prices then paid were at the rate of 6d. per hour. For the same driving capes that they paid 18s. then, they give only 12s. for now. For the dress and frock coats they gave 15s. then, and now they are 14s. The paletots and shooting coats were 12s.; there was no coat made on the premises under that sum. At the end of the season, they wanted to reduce the paletots to 9s. The men refused to make them at that price, when other houses were paying as much as 15s. for them. The consequence of this was, the house dis-

charged all the men, and got a Jew middle-man from the neighbourhood of Petticoat Lane, to agree to do them all at 7s. 6d. a piece. The Jew employed all the poor people who were at work for the slop warehouses in Houndsditch and its vicinity. This Jew makes on an average 500 paletots a week. The Jew gets 2s. 6d. profit out of each, and having no sewing trimmings allowed to him, he makes the work-people find them. The saving in trimmings alone to the firm, since the workmen left the premises, must have realised a small fortune to them. Calculating men, women, and children, I have heard it said that the cheap house at the West End employs 1000 hands. The trimmings for the work done by these would be about 6d. a week per head, so that the saving to the house since the men worked on the premises has been no less than £1300 a year, and all this taken out of the pockets of the poor. The Jew who contracts for making the paletots is no tailor at all. A few years ago he sold sponges in the street, and now he rides in his carriage. The Jew's profits are 500 half-crowns, or £60 odd, per week—that is upwards of £3000 a year. Women are mostly engaged at the paletot work. When I came to work for the cheap show-shop I had £5:10s. in the saving bank; now I have not a halfpenny in it. All I had saved went little by little to keep me and my family. I have always made a point of putting some money by when I could afford it, but since I have been at this work it has been as much as I could do to *live*, much more to *save*. One of the firm for which I work has been heard publicly to declare that he employed 1000 hands constantly. Now the earnings of these at the honourable part of the trade would be upon an average, taking the skilful with the unskilful, 15s. a week each, or £39,000 a year. But since they discharged the men from off their premises, they have cut down the wages of the workmen one-half—taking one garment with another—*though the selling prices remain the same to the public*, so that they have saved by the reduction of the workmen's wages no less than £19,500 per year. Every other quarter of a

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year something has been “docked” off our earnings, until it is almost impossible for men with families to live decently by their labour; and now, for the first time, they pretend to feel for them. They even talk of erecting a school for the children of their workpeople; but where is the use of erecting schools, when they know as well as we do, that at the wages they pay, the children must be working for their fathers at home? They had much better erect workshops, and employ the men on the premises at fair living wages, and then the men could educate their own children, without being indebted to their charity.’

On this last question of what the master-cannibals had ‘much better do,’ we have somewhat to say presently. In the meantime, hear another of the things which they had much better *not* do. ‘Part of the fraud and deception of the slop trade consists in the mode in which the public are made believe that the men working for such establishments earn more money than they really do. The plan practised is similar to that adopted by the army clothier, who made out that the men working on his establishment made per week from 15s. to 17s. each, whereas, on inquiry, it was found that a considerable sum was paid out of that to those who helped to do the looping for those who took it home. When a coat is given to me to make, a ticket is handed to me with the garment, similar to this one which I have obtained from a friend of mine.

448

Mr. Smith, 6,675 Made by M

Ze = 12s. = lined lustre

quilted double stitched
each side seams

448. No. 6,675.

o'clock Friday

Mr. Smith

On this you see the price is marked at 12s.,’ continued

my informant, 'and supposing that I, with two others, could make three of these garments in the week, the sum of thirty-six shillings would stand in the books of the establishment as the amount earned by me in that space of time. This would be sure to be exhibited to the customers, immediately that there was the least outcry made about the starvation price they paid for their work, as a proof that the workpeople engaged on their establishment received the full prices; whereas, of that 36s. entered against my name, *I should have had to pay 24s. to those who assisted me*; besides this, my share of the trimmings and expenses would have been 1s. 6d., and probably my share of the fires would be 1s. more; so that the real fact would be, that I should make 9s. 6d. clear, and this it would be almost impossible to do, if I did not work long over hours. I am obliged to keep my wife continually at work helping me, in order to live.'

In short, the condition of these men is far worse than that of the wretched labourers of Wilts or Dorset. Their earnings are as low and often lower; their trade requires a far longer instruction, far greater skill and shrewdness; their rent and food are more expensive; and their hours of work, while they have work, more than half as long again. Conceive sixteen or eighteen hours of skilled labour in a stifling and fetid chamber, earning not much more than 6s. 6d. or 7s. a week! And, as has been already mentioned in one case, the man who will earn even that, must work all Sunday. He is even liable to be thrown out of his work for refusing to work on Sunday. Why not? Is there anything about one idle day in seven to be found among the traditions of Mammon? When the demand comes, the supply must come; and will, in spite of foolish auld-worl'd notion about keeping days holy—or keeping contracts holy either, for, indeed, Mammon has no conscience—right and wrong are not words expressible by any commercial laws yet in vogue; and therefore it appears that to earn this wretched pittance is by no means to get it. 'For,' says one, and the practice is asserted to be general, almost universal, 'there

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is at our establishment a mode of reducing the price of our labour even lower than we have mentioned. The prices we have stated are those *nominally* paid for making the garments; but it is not an uncommon thing in our shop for a man to make a garment, and receive nothing at all for it. I remember a man once having a waistcoat to do, the price of making which was 2s., and when he gave the job in he was told that he owed the establishment 6d. The manner in which this is brought about is by a system of fines. We are fined if we are behind time with our job, 6d. the first hour, and 3d. for each hour that we are late.' 'I have known as much as 7s. 6d. to be deducted off the price of a coat on the score of want of punctuality,' one said; 'and, indeed, very often the whole money is stopped. It would appear as if our employers themselves strove to make us late with our work, and so have an opportunity of cutting down the price paid for our labour. They frequently put off giving out the trimmings to us till the time at which the coat is due has expired. If to the trimmer we return an answer that is considered "saucy," we are fined 6d. or 1s., according to the trimmer's temper.' 'I was called a thief,' another of the three declared, 'and because I told the man I would not submit to such language, I was fined 6d. These are the principal of the indoor fines. The outdoor fines are still more iniquitous. There are full a dozen more fines for minor offences; indeed, we are fined upon every petty pretext. We never know what we have to take on a Saturday, for the meanest advantages are taken to reduce our wages. If we object to pay these fines, we are told that we may leave; but they know full well that we are afraid to throw ourselves out of work.'

Folks are getting somewhat tired of the old rodomontade that a slave is free the moment he sets foot on British soil! Stuff!—are these tailors free? Put any conceivable sense you will on the word, and then say—are they free? We have, thank God, emancipated the black slaves; it would seem a not inconsistent sequel to that act

to set about emancipating these white ones. Oh! we forgot; there is an infinite difference between the two cases—the black slaves worked for our colonies; the white slaves work for *us*. But, indeed, if, as some preach, self-interest is the mainspring of all human action, it is difficult to see who will step forward to emancipate the said white slaves; for all classes seem to consider it equally their interest to keep them as they are; all classes, though by their own confession they are ashamed, are yet not afraid to profit by the system which keeps them down.

Not only the master tailors and their underlings, but the retail tradesmen, too, make their profit out of these abominations. By a method which smacks at first sight somewhat of benevolence, but proves itself in practice to be one of those ‘precious balms which break,’ not ‘the head’ (for that would savour of violence, and might possibly give some bodily pain, a thing intolerable to the nerves of Mammon) but the heart—an organ which, being spiritual, can of course be recognised by no laws of police or commerce. The object of the State, we are told, is ‘the conservation of body and goods’; there is nothing in that about broken hearts; nothing which should make it a duty to forbid such a system as a working tailor here describes—

‘Fifteen or twenty years ago, such a thing as a journeyman tailor having to give security before he could get work was unknown; but now I and such as myself could not get a stitch to do first handed, if we did not either procure the security of some householder, or deposit £5 in the hands of the employer. The reason of this is, the journeymen are so badly paid that the employers know they can barely live on what they get, and consequently they are often driven to pawn the garments given out to them, in order to save themselves and their families from starving. If the journeyman can manage to scrape together £5, he has to leave it in the hands of his employer all the time that he is working for the house. I know one person who gives out the work for a fashionable West End slop-shop that will not take household

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security, and requires £5 from each hand. I am informed by one of the parties who worked for this man that he has as many as 150 hands in his employ, and that each of these has placed £5 in his hands, so that altogether the poor people have handed over £750 to increase the capital upon which he trades, and for which he pays no interest whatsoever.'

This recalls a similar case (mentioned by a poor stay-stitcher in another letter, published in the *Morning Chronicle*), of a large wholesale staymaker in the City, who had amassed a large fortune by beginning to trade upon the 5s. which he demanded to be left in his hands by his workpeople before he gave them employment.

'Two or three years back one of the slop-sellers at the East End became bankrupt, and the poor people lost all the money that had been deposited as security for work in his hands. The journeymen who get the security of householders are enabled to do so by a system which is now in general practice at the East End. Several bakers, publicans, chandler-shop keepers, and coal-shed keepers, make a trade of becoming security for those seeking slop-work. They consent to be responsible for the workpeople upon the condition of the men dealing at their shops. The workpeople who require such security are generally very good customers, from the fact of their either having large families, all engaged in the same work, or else several females or males working under them, and living at their house. The parties becoming securities thus not only greatly increase their trade, but furnish a second-rate article at a first-rate price. It is useless to complain of the bad quality or high price of the articles supplied by the securities, for the shopkeepers know, as well as the workpeople, that it is impossible for the hands to leave them without losing their work. I know one baker whose security was refused at the slop-shop because he was already responsible for so many, and he begged the publican to be his deputy, so that by this means the workpeople were obliged to deal at both baker's and publican's too. I never heard of a butcher making a

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trade of becoming security, *because the slopwork people cannot afford to consume much meat.*

‘The same system is also pursued by lodging-house keepers. They will become responsible if the workmen requiring security will undertake to lodge at their house.’

But of course the men most interested in keeping up the system are those who buy the clothes of these cheap shops. And who are they? Not merely the blackguard gent—the butt of Albert Smith and Punch, who flaunts at the Casinos and Cremorne Gardens in vulgar finery wrung out of the souls and bodies of the poor; not merely the poor lawyer’s clerk or reduced half-pay officer who has to struggle to look as respectable as his class commands him to look on a pittance often no larger than that of the day labourer—no, strange to say—and yet not strange, considering our modern eleventh commandment—‘Buy cheap and sell dear,’ the richest as well as the poorest imitate the example of King Ryence and the tanners of Meudon. At a great show establishment—to take one instance out of many—the very one where, as we heard just now, ‘however strong and healthy a man may be when he goes to work at that shop, in a month’s time he will be a complete shadow, and have almost all his clothes in pawn’—

‘We have also made garments for Sir———, Sir———, Alderman———, Dr.———, and Dr.———. We make for several of the aristocracy. We cannot say whom, because the tickets frequently come to us as Lord——— and the Marquis of———. This could not be a Jew’s trick, because the buttons on the liveries had coronets upon them. And again, we know the house is patronised largely by the aristocracy, clergy, and gentry, by the number of court-suits and liveries, surplices, regimentals, and ladies’ riding-habits that we continually have to make up. *There are more clergymen among the customers than any other class, and often we have to work at home upon the Sunday at their clothes, in order to get a living.* The customers are mostly ashamed of dealing at this house, for

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the men who take the clothes to the customers' houses in the cart have directions to pull up at the corner of the street. We had a good proof of the dislike of gentlefolks to have it known that they dealt at that shop for their clothes, for when the trousers buttons were stamped with the name of the firm, we used to have the garments returned, daily, to have other buttons put on them, and now the buttons are unstamped'!!! ✓

We shall make no comment on this extract. It needs none. If these men know how their clothes are made, they are past contempt. Afraid of man, and not afraid of God! As if His eye could not see the cart laden with the plunder of the poor, because it stopped round the corner! If, on the other hand, they do *not* know these things, and doubtless the majority do not,—it is their sin that they do not know it. Woe to a society whose only apology to God and man is, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Men ought to know the condition of those by whose labour they live. Had the question been the investment of a few pounds in a speculation, these gentlemen would have been careful enough about good security. Ought they to take no security when they invest their money in clothes, that they are not putting on their backs accursed garments, offered in sacrifice to devils, reeking with the sighs of the starving, tainted—yes, tainted, indeed, for it comes out now that diseases numberless are carried home in these same garments from the miserable abodes where they are made. Evidence to this effect was given in 1844; but Mammon was too busy to attend to it. These wretched creatures, when they have pawned their own clothes and bedding, will use as substitutes the very garments they are making. So Lord ——'s coat has been seen covering a group of children blotched with small-pox. The Rev. D—— finds himself suddenly unpresentable from a cutaneous disease, which it is not polite to mention on the south of Tweed, little dreaming that the shivering, dirty being who made his coat has been sitting with his arms in the sleeves for warmth while he stitched at the tails. The charming Miss C—— is swept off by typhus

or scarlatina, and her parents talk about 'God's heavy judgment and visitation'—had they tracked the girl's new riding-habit back to the stifling undrained hovel where it served as a blanket to the fever-stricken slopworker, they would have seen *why* God had visited them, seen that His judgments are true judgments, and give His plain opinion of the system which 'speaketh good of the covetous whom God abhorreth'—a system, to use the words of the *Morning Chronicle's* correspondent, 'unheard of and unparalleled in the history of any country—a scheme so deeply laid for the introduction and supply of underpaid labour to the market, that it is impossible for the working man not to sink and be degraded by it into the lowest depths of wretchedness and infamy—a system which is steadily and gradually increasing, and sucking more and more victims out of the honourable trade, who are really intelligent artisans, living in comparative comfort and civilisation, into the dishonourable or sweating trade in which the slopworkers are generally almost brutified by their incessant toil, wretched pay, miserable food, and filthy homes.'

But to us, almost the worst feature in the whole matter is, that the Government are not merely parties to, but actually the originators of this system. The contract-system, as a working tailor stated, in the name of the rest, 'had been mainly instrumental in destroying the living wages of the working man. Now, the Government were the sole originators of the system of contracts and of sweating. Forty years ago, there was nothing known of contracts, except Government contracts; and at that period the contractors were confined to making slops for the navy, the army, and the West India slaves. It was never dreamt of then that such a system was to come into operation in the better classes of trade, till ultimately it was destructive of masters as well as men. The Government having been the cause of the contract system, and consequently of the sweating system, he called upon them to abandon it. The sweating system had established the show-shops and the ticket system, both of which were

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countenanced by the Government, till it had become a fashion to support them.

‘Even the Court assisted to keep the system in fashion, and the royal arms and the royal warrants were now exhibited common enough by slopsellers.’

‘Government said, its duty was to do justice. But was it consistent with justice to pay only 2s. 6d. for making navy jackets, which would be paid 10s. for by every “honourable” tradesman? Was it consistent with justice for the Government to pay for Royal Marine clothing (private’s coat and epaulettes) 1s. 9d.? Was it consistent with justice for the Government to pay for making a pair of trousers (four or five hours’ work) only 2½d.? And yet, when a contractor, noted for paying just wages to those he employed, brought this under the consideration of the Admiralty, they declared they had nothing to do with it. Here is their answer :—

‘ADMIRALTY, *March 19, 1847.*

‘Sir—Having laid before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter of the 8th inst., calling their attention to the extremely low prices paid for making up articles of clothing, provided for Her Majesty’s naval service, I am commanded by their lordships to acquaint you that they have no control whatever over the wages paid for making up contract clothing. Their duty is to take care that the articles supplied are of good quality, and well made: the cost of the material and workmanship are matters which rest with the contractor; and if the public were to pay him a higher price than that demanded, it would not ensure any advantage to the men employed by him, as their wages depend upon the amount of competition for employment amongst themselves.

‘I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

‘H. G. WARD.

‘W. Shaw, Esq.’

Oh most impotent conclusion, however officially cautious, and ‘philosophically’ correct! Even if the

wages did depend entirely on the amount of competition, on whom does the amount of competition depend? Merely on the gross numbers of the workmen? Somewhat, too, one would think, on the system according to which the labour and the wages are distributed. But right or wrong, is it not a pleasant answer for the poor working tailors, and one likely to increase their faith, hope, and charity towards the present commercial system, and those who deny the possibility of any other?

‘The Government,’ says another tailor at the same meeting, ‘had really been the means of reducing prices in the tailoring trade to so low a scale that no human being, whatever his industry, could live and be happy in his lot. The Government were really responsible for the first introduction of female labour. He would clearly prove what he had stated. He would refer first to the army clothing. Our soldiers were comfortably clothed, as they had a right to be; but surely the men who made the clothing which was so comfortable, ought to be paid for their labour so as to be able to keep themselves comfortable and their families virtuous.’ But it was in evidence, that the persons working upon army clothing could not, upon an average, earn more than 1s. a day. Another Government department, the post-office, offered a considerable amount of employment to tailors; but those who worked upon the post-office clothing earned, at the most, only 1s. 6d. a day. The police clothing was another considerable branch of tailoring; this, like the others, ought to be paid for at living prices; but the men at work at it could only earn 1s. 6d. a day, supposing them to work hard all the time, fourteen or fifteen hours. The Custom House clothing gave about the same prices. Now, all these sorts of work were performed by time workers, who, as a natural consequence of the wages they received, were the most miserable of human beings. Husband, wife, and family all worked at it; they just tried to breathe upon it; to live it never could be called. *Yet the same Government which paid such wretched wages, called upon the wretched people to be industrious, to be virtuous, and happy.* How was it

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possible, whatever their industry, to be virtuous and happy? The fact was, the men who, at the slack season, had been compelled to fall back upon these kinds of work, became so beggared and broken down by it, notwithstanding the assistance of their wives and families, that they were never able to rise out of it.'

And now comes the question—What is to be done with these poor tailors, to the number of between fifteen and twenty thousand? Their condition, as it stands, is simply one of ever-increasing darkness and despair. The system which is ruining them is daily spreading, deepening. While we write, fresh victims are being driven by penury into the slop-working trade, fresh depreciations of labour are taking place. Like Ulysses' companions in the cave of Polyphemus, the only question among them is, to scramble so far back as to have *a chance of being eaten at last*. Before them is ever-nearing slavery, disease, and starvation. What can be done?

First—this can be done. 'That no man who calls himself a Christian—no man who calls himself a man—shall ever disgrace himself by dealing at any show-shop or slop-shop. It is easy enough to know them. The ticketed garments, the impudent puffs, the trumpery decorations, proclaim them,—every one knows them at first sight. He who pretends not to do so is simply either a fool or a liar. Let no man enter them—they are the temples of Moloch—their thresholds are rank with human blood. God's curse is on them, and on those who, by supporting them, are partakers of their sins. Above all, let no clergyman deal at them. Poverty—and many clergymen are poor—doubly poor, because society often requires them to keep up the dress of gentlemen on the income of an artisan; because, too, the demands on their charity are quadruple those of any other class—yet poverty is no excuse. The thing is damnable—not Christianity only, but common humanity cries out against it. Woe to those who dare to outrage in private the principles which they preach in public! God is not mocked; and His curse will find out

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the priest at the altar, as well as the nobleman in his castle.

But it is so hard to deprive the public of the luxury of cheap clothes! Then let the public look out for some other means of procuring that priceless blessing. If that, on experiment, be found impossible—if the comfort of the few be for ever to be bought by the misery of the many—if civilisation is to benefit every one except the producing class—then this world is truly the devil's world, and the sooner so ill-constructed and infernal a machine is destroyed by that personage, the better.

But let, secondly, a dozen, or fifty, or a hundred journeymen say to one another: 'It is competition that is ruining us, and competition is division, disunion, every man for himself, every man against his brother. The remedy must be in association, co-operation, self-sacrifice for the sake of one another. We can work together at the honourable tailor's workshop—we can work and live together in the sweater's den for the profit of our employers; why should we not work and live together in our own workshops, or our own homes, for our own profit? The journeymen of the honourable trade are just as much interested as the slopworkers in putting down sweaters and slopsellers, since their numbers are constantly decreasing, so that their turn must come some day. Let them, if no one else does, lend money to allow us to set up a workshop of our own, a shop of our own. If the money be not lent, still let us stint and strain ourselves to the very bone, if it were only to raise one sweater's security-money, which one of us should pay into the slopseller's hands, in his own name, but on behalf of all: that will at least save one sweater's profit out of our labour, and bestow it upon ourselves; and we will not spend that profit, but hoard it, till we have squeezed out all the sweaters one by one. Then we will open our common shop, and sell at as low a price as the cheapest of the show-shops. We *can* do this,—by the abolition of sweaters' profits,—by the using, as far as possible, of one

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set of fires, lights, rooms, kitchens, and washhouses,—above all, by being true and faithful to one another, as all partners should be. And, then, all that the master slopsellers had better do, will be simply to vanish and become extinct.'

And again, let one man, or half a dozen men arise, who believe that the world is not the devil's world at all, but God's: that the multitude of the people is not, as Malthusians aver, the ruin, but as Solomon believed, 'the strength of the rulers'; that men are not meant to be beasts of prey, eating one another up by competition, as in some confined pike pond, where the great pike, having despatched the little ones, begin to devour each other, till one overgrown monster is left alone to die of starvation. Let a few men who have money, and believe that, arise to play the man.

Let them help and foster the growth of association by all means. Let them advise the honourable tailors, while it is time, to save themselves from being degraded into slopsellers by admitting their journeymen to a share in profits. Let them encourage the journeymen to complete with Nebuchadnezzar and Co. at their own game. Let them tell those journeymen that the experiment is even now being tried, and, in many instances successfully, by no less than one hundred and four associations of journeymen in Paris. Let them remind them of that Great Name which the Parisian 'ouvrier' so often forgets—of Him whose everlasting Fatherhood is the sole ground of all human brotherhood, whose wise and loving will is the sole source of all perfect order and government. Let them, as soon as an association is formed, provide for them a properly ventilated workshop, and let it out to the associate tailors at a low, fair rent. I believe that they will not lose by it—because it is right. God will take care of their money. The world, it comes out now, is so well ordered by Him, that model lodging-houses, public baths, wash-houses, insurance offices, all pay a reasonable profit to those who invest money in them—perhaps associate workshops may do the same. At all

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events, the owners of these show-shops realise a far higher profit than need be, while the buildings required for a tailoring establishment are surely not more costly than those absurd plate-glass fronts, and brass scroll-work chandeliers, and puffs, and paid poets. A large house might thus be taken, in some central situation, the upper floors of which might be fitted up as model lodging-rooms for the tailors' trade alone. The drawing-room floor might be the work-room; on the ground floor the shop; and, if possible, a room of call or registration office for unemployed journeymen, and a reading-room. Why should not this succeed, if the owners of the house and the workers who rent it are only true to one another? Every tyro in political economy knows that association involves a saving both of labour and of capital. Why should it not succeed, when every one connected with the establishment, landlords and workmen, will have an interest in increasing its prosperity, and none whatever in lowering the wages of any party employed?

But above all, so soon as these men are found working together for common profit, in the spirit of mutual self-sacrifice, let every gentleman and every Christian, who has ever dealt with, or could ever have dealt with, Nebuchadnezzar and Co., or their fellows, make it a point of honour and conscience to deal with the associated workmen, and get others to do the like. *It is by securing custom, far more than by gifts or loans of money, that we can help the operatives.* We should but hang a useless burthen of debt round their necks by advancing capital, without affording them the means of disposing of their produce.

Be assured, that the finding of a tailors' model lodging-house, work-rooms, and shop, and the letting out of the two latter to an association, would be a righteous act to do. If the plan does not pay, what then? only a part of the money can be lost; and to have given that to an hospital or an almshouse would have been called praiseworthy and Christian charity; how much more to have

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spent it not in the cure, but in the prevention of evil—in making almshouses less needful, and lessening the number of candidates for the hospital!

Regulations as to police order, and temperance, the workmen must, and, if they are worthy of the name of free men, they can organise for themselves. Let them remember that an association of labour is very different from an association of capital. The capitalist only embarks his money on the venture; the workman embarks his time—that is, much at least of his life. Still more different is the operatives' association from the single capitalist, seeking only to realise a rapid fortune, and then withdraw. The association knows no withdrawal from business; it must grow in length and in breadth, outlasting rival slop-sellers, swallowing up all associations similar to itself, and which might end by competing with it. 'Monopoly!' cries a free-trader, with hair on end. Not so, good friend; there will be no real free trade without association. Who tells you that tailors' associations are to be the only ones?

Some such thing, as I have hinted, might surely be done. Where there is a will there is a way. No doubt there are difficulties—Howard and Elizabeth Fry, too, had their difficulties. Brindley and Brunel did not succeed at the first trial. It is the sluggard only who is always crying, 'There is a lion in the streets.' Be daring—trust in God, and He will fight for you; man of money, whom these words have touched, godliness has the promise of this life, as well as of that to come. The thing must be done, and speedily; for if it be not done by fair means, it will surely do itself by foul. The continual struggle of competition, not only in the tailors' trade, but in every one which is not, like the navigator's or engineer's, at a premium from its novel and extraordinary demand, will weaken and undermine more and more the masters, who are already many of them speculating on borrowed capital, while it will depress the workmen to a point at which life will become utterly intolerable; increasing education will serve only to make them the more conscious of their own

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misery ; the boiler will be strained to bursting pitch, till some jar, some slight crisis, suddenly directs the imprisoned forces to one point, and then——

What then?

Look at France, and see.

PARSON LOT.

PREFACE

TO THE UNDERGRADUATES OF CAMBRIDGE

I HAVE addressed this preface to the young gentlemen of the University, first, because it is my duty to teach such of them as will hear me Modern History ; and I know no more important part of Modern History than the condition and the opinions of our own fellow-countrymen, some of which are set forth in this book.

Next, I have addressed them now, because I know that many of them, at various times, have taken umbrage at certain scenes of Cambridge life drawn in this book. I do not blame them for having done so. On the contrary, I have so far acknowledged the justice of their censure, that while I have altered hardly one other word in this book, I have re-written all that relates to Cambridge life.

Those sketches were drawn from my own recollections of 1838-1842. Whether they were overdrawn is a question between me and men of my own standing.

But the book was published in 1849 ; and I am assured by men in whom I have the most thorough confidence, that my sketches had by then at least become exaggerated and exceptional, and therefore, as a whole, untrue ; that a process of purification was going on rapidly in the University ; and that I must alter my words if I meant to give the working men a just picture of her.

Circumstances took the property and control of the book out of my hand, and I had no opportunity of reconsidering and of altering the passages. Those circumstances

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have ceased, and I take the first opportunity of altering all which my friends tell me should be altered.

But even if, as early as 1849, I had not been told that I must do so, I should have done so of my own accord, after the experiences of 1861. I have received at Cambridge a courtesy and kindness from my elders, a cordial welcome from my coequals, and an earnest attention from the undergraduates with whom I have come in contact, which would bind me in honour to say nothing publicly against my University, even if I had aught to say. But I have nought. I see at Cambridge nothing which does not gain my respect for her present state and hope for her future. Increased sympathy between the old and young, increased intercourse between the teacher and the taught, increased freedom and charity of thought, and a steady purpose of internal self-reform and progress, seem to me already bearing good fruit, by making the young men regard their University with content and respect. And among the young men themselves, the sight of their increased earnestness and high-mindedness, increased sobriety and temperance, combined with a manliness not inferior to that of the stalwart lads of twenty years ago, has made me look upon my position among them as most noble, my work among them as most hopeful, and made me sure that no energy which I can employ in teaching them will ever have been thrown away.

Much of this improvement seems to me due to the late High-Church movement; much to the influence of Dr. Arnold; much to that of Mr. Maurice; much to the general increase of civilisation throughout the country: but whatever be the causes of it, the fact is patent; and I take delight in thus expressing my consciousness of it.

Another change I must notice in the tone of young gentlemen, not only at Cambridge, but throughout Britain, which is most wholesome and most hopeful. I mean their altered tone in speaking to and of the labouring classes. Thirty years ago, and even later, the young men of the labouring classes were 'the cads,' 'the snobs,' 'the blackguards'; looked on with a dislike, contempt, and fear,

To the Undergraduates of Cambridge

which they were not backward to return, and which were but too ready to vent themselves on both sides in ugly words and deeds. That hateful severance between the classes was, I believe, an evil of recent growth, unknown to old England. From the middle ages, up to the latter years of the French war, the relation between the English gentry and the labourers seems to have been more cordial and wholesome than in any other country of Europe. But with the French Revolution came a change for the worse. The Revolution terrified too many of the upper, and excited too many of the lower classes ; and the stern Tory system of repression, with its bad habit of talking and acting as if 'the government' and 'the people' were necessarily in antagonism, caused ever-increasing bad blood. Besides, the old feudal ties between class and class, employer and employed, had been severed. Large masses of working people had gathered in the manufacturing districts in savage independence. The agricultural labourers had been debased by the abuses of the old Poor Law into a condition upon which one looks back now with half-incredulous horror. Meanwhile, the distress of the labourers became more and more severe. Then arose Luddite mobs, meal mobs, farm riots, riots everywhere ; Captain Swing and his rickburners, Peterloo 'massacres,' Bristol conflagrations, and all the ugly sights and rumours which made young lads, thirty or forty years ago, believe (and not so wrongly) that 'the masses' were their natural enemies, and that they might have to fight, any year, or any day, for the safety of their property and the honour of their sisters.

How changed, thank God ! is all this now. Before the influence of religion, both Evangelical and Anglican ; before the spread of those liberal principles, founded on common humanity and justice, the triumph of which we owe to the courage and practical good sense of the Whig party ; before the example of a Court, virtuous, humane, and beneficent ; the attitude of the British upper classes has undergone a noble change. There is no aristocracy in the world, and there never has been one, as far as I know,

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which has so honourably repented, and brought forth fruits meet for repentance ; which has so cheerfully asked what its duty was, that it might do it. It is not merely enlightened statesmen, philanthropists, devotees, or the working clergy, hard and heartily as they are working, who have set themselves to do good as a duty specially required of them by creed or by station. In the generality of younger laymen, as far as I can see, a humanity (in the highest sense of the word) has been awakened, which bids fair, in another generation, to abolish the last remnants of class prejudices and class grudges. The whole creed of our young gentlemen is becoming more liberal, their demeanour more courteous, their language more temperate. They inquire after the welfare, or at least mingle in the sports of the labouring man, with a simple cordiality which was unknown thirty years ago ; they are prompt, the more earnest of them, to make themselves of use to him on the ground of a common manhood, if any means of doing good are pointed out to them ; and that it is in any wise degrading to ‘associate with low fellows,’ is an opinion utterly obsolete, save perhaps among a few sons of squireens in remote provinces, or of parvenus who cannot afford to recognise the class from whence they themselves have risen. In the army, thanks to the purifying effect of the Crimean and Indian wars, the same altered tone is patent. Officers feel for and with their men, talk to them, strive to instruct and amuse them more and more year by year ; and—as a proof that the reform has not been forced on the officers by public opinion from without, but is spontaneous and from within, another instance of the altered mind of the aristocracy—the improvement is greatest in those regiments which are officered by men of the best blood ; and in care for and sympathy with their men, Her Majesty’s Footguards stand first of all. God grant that the friendship which exists there between the leaders and the led may not be tested to the death amid the snowdrift or on the battlefield ; but if it be so, I know too that it will stand the test.

But if I wish for one absolute proof of the changed

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relation between the upper and the lower classes, I have only to point to the volunteer movement. In 1803, in the face of the most real and fatal danger, the Addington ministry was afraid of allowing volunteer regiments, and Lord Eldon, while pressing the necessity, could use as an argument that if the people did not volunteer for the Government, they would against it. So broad was even then the gulf between the governed and the governors. How much broader did it become in after years! Had invasion threatened us at any period between 1815 and 1830, or even later, would any ministry have dared to allow volunteer regiments? Would they have been justified in doing so, even if they had dared?

And now what has come to pass, all the world knows; but all the world should know likewise that it never would have come to pass save for—not merely the late twenty years of good government in State, twenty years of virtue and liberality in the Court, but—the late twenty years of increasing right-mindedness in the gentry, who have now their reward in finding that the privates in the great majority of corps prefer being officered by men of a rank socially superior to their own. And as good always breeds fresh good, so this volunteer movement, made possible by the goodwill between classes, will help in its turn to increase that goodwill. Already, by the performance of a common duty, and the experience of a common humanity, these volunteer corps are become centres of cordiality between class and class; and gentleman, tradesman, and workman, the more they see of each other, learn to like, to trust, and to befriend each other more and more; a good work in which I hope the volunteers of the University of Cambridge will do their part like men and gentlemen; when, leaving this University, they become each of them, as they ought, an organising point for fresh volunteers in their own districts.

I know (that I may return to Cambridge) no better example of the way in which the altered tone of the upper classes and the volunteer movement have acted and reacted upon each other, than may be seen in the Cambridge

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Working Men's College, and its volunteer rifle corps, the 8th Cambridgeshire.

There we have—what perhaps could not have existed, what certainly did not exist twenty years ago—a school of a hundred men or more, taught for the last eight years gratuitously by men of the highest attainments in the University ; by a dean—to whom, I believe, the success of the attempt is mainly owing ; by professors, tutors, prizemen, men who are now headmasters of public schools, who have given freely to their fellow-men knowledge which has cost them large sums of money and the heavy labour of years. Without insulting them by patronage, without interfering with their religious opinions, without tampering with their independence in any wise, but simply on the ground of a common humanity, they have been helping to educate these men, belonging for the most part, I presume, to the very class which this book sets forth as most unhappy and most dangerous—the men conscious of unsatisfied and unemployed intellect. And they have their reward in a practical and patent form. Out of these men a volunteer corps is organised, officered partly by themselves, partly by gentlemen of the University ; a nucleus of discipline, loyalty, and civilisation for the whole population of Cambridge.

A noble work this has been, and one which may be the parent of works nobler still. It is the first instalment of, I will not say a debt, but a duty, which the Universities owe to the working classes. I have tried to express in this book what I know were, twenty years ago, the feelings of clever working men, looking upon the superior educational advantages of our class. I cannot forget, any more than the working man, that the Universities were not founded exclusively, or even primarily, for our own class ; that the great mass of students in the middle ages were drawn from the lower classes, and that sizarships, scholarships, exhibitions, and so forth, were founded for the sake of those classes, rather than of our own. How the case stands now, we all know. I do not blame the Universities for the change. It has come about, I think,

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simply by competition. The change began, I should say, in the sixteenth century. Then, after the Wars of the Roses, and the revival of letters, and the dissolution of the monasteries, the younger sons of gentlemen betook themselves to the pursuit of letters, fighting having become treasonable, and farming on a small scale difficult (perhaps owing to the introduction of large sheep-farms, which happened in those days), while no monastic orders were left to recruit the Universities, as they did continually through the middle ages, from that labouring class to which they and their scholars principally belonged.] u b

So the gentlemen's sons were free to compete against the sons of working men ; and by virtue of their superior advantages they beat them out of the field. We may find, through the latter half of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, bequest after bequest for the purpose of stopping this change, and of enabling poor men's sons to enter the Universities ; but the tendency was too strong to be effectually resisted then. Is it too strong to be resisted now ? Does not the increased civilisation and education of the working classes call on the Universities to consider whether they may not now try to become, what certainly they were meant to be, places of teaching and training for genius of every rank, and not merely for that of young gentlemen ? Why should not wealthy Churchmen, in addition to the many good deeds in which they employ their wealth nowadays, found fresh scholarships and exhibitions, confined to the sons of working men ? If it be asked, how can they be so confined ? What simpler method than that of connecting them with the National Society, and bestowing them exclusively on lads who have distinguished themselves in our National Schools ? I believe that money spent in such a way would be well spent both for the Nation, the Church, and the University. As for the introduction of such a class of lads lowering the tone of the University, I cannot believe it. There is room enough in Cambridge for men of every rank. There are still, in certain colleges, owing to circumstances which I should be very sorry to

see altered, a fair sprinkling of young men who, at least before they have passed through a Cambridge career, would not be called well-bred. But they do not lower the tone of the University; the tone of the University raises them. Wherever there is intellectual power, good manners are easily acquired; the public opinion of young men expresses itself so freely, and possibly coarsely, that priggishness and forwardness (the faults to which a clever National School pupil would be most prone) are soon hammered out of any Cambridge man; and the result is, that some of the most distinguished and most popular men in Cambridge are men who have 'risen from the ranks.' All honour to them for having done so. But if they have succeeded so well, may there not be hundreds more in England who would succeed equally? and would it not be as just to the many as useful to the University, in binding her to the people, and the people to her, to invent some method for giving those hundreds a fair chance?

I earnestly press this suggestion (especially at the present time of agitation among Churchmen on the subject of education) upon the attention, not of the University itself, but of those wealthy men who wish well both to the University and to the people. Not, I say, of the University: it is not from her that the proposal must come, but from her friends outside. She is doing her best with the tools which she has; fresh work will require fresh tools, and I trust that such will be some day found for her.

I have now to tell those of them who may read this book, that it is not altogether out of date.

Those political passions, the last outburst of which it described, have, thank God, become mere matter of history by reason of the good government and the unexampled prosperity of the last twelve years; but fresh outbursts of them are always possible in a free country, whenever there is any considerable accumulation of neglects and wrongs; and meanwhile it is well—indeed it is necessary—for every student of history to know what manner of men they are who become revolutionaries, and what causes drive them to revolution; that they may judge discern-

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ingly and charitably of their fellow-men, whenever they see them rising, however madly, against the powers that be.

As for the social evils described in this book, they have been much lessened in the last few years, especially by the movement for Sanitary Reform : but I must warn young men that they are not eradicated ; that, for instance, only last year, attention was called by this book to the working tailors in Edinburgh, and their state was found, I am assured, to be even more miserable than that of the London men in 1848. And I must warn them also that social evils, like dust and dirt, have a tendency to re-accumulate perpetually ; so that however well this generation may have swept their house (and they have worked hard and honestly at it), the rising generation will have assuredly in twenty years' time to sweep it over again.

One thing more I have to say, and that very earnestly, to the young men of Cambridge. They will hear a 'Conservative Reaction' talked of as imminent, indeed as having already begun. They will be told that this reaction is made more certain by the events now passing in North America ; they will be bidden to look at the madresses of an unbridled democracy, to draw from them some such lesson as the young Spartans were to draw from the drunken Helots, and to shun with horror any further attempts to enlarge the suffrage.

But if they have learnt (as they should from the training of this University) accuracy of thought and language, they will not be content with such vague general terms as 'Conservatism' and 'Democracy' : but will ask themselves—If this Conservative Reaction is at hand, what things is it likely to conserve ; and still more, what ought it to conserve ? If the violences and tyrannies of American Democracy are to be really warnings to us, then in what points does American Democracy coincide with British Democracy ?—For so far and no farther can one be an example or warning for the other.

And looking, as they probably will under the pressure of present excitement, at the latter question first, they will surely see that no real analogy would exist between

American and English Democracy, even were universal suffrage to be granted to-morrow.

For American Democracy, being merely arithmocratic, provides no representation whatsoever for the more educated and more experienced minority, and leaves the conduct of affairs to the uneducated and inexperienced many, with such results as we see. But those results are, I believe, simply impossible in a country which possesses hereditary Monarchy and a House of Lords, to give not only voice, but practical power to superior intelligence and experience. Mr. J. S. Mill, Mr. Stapleton, and Mr. Hare have urged of late the right of minorities to be represented as well as majorities, and have offered plans for giving them a fair hearing. That their demands are wise, as well as just, the present condition of the Federal States proves but too painfully. But we must not forget, meanwhile, that the minorities of Britain are not altogether unrepresented. In a hereditary Monarch who has the power to call into his counsels, private and public, the highest intellect of the land ; in a House of Lords not wholly hereditary, but recruited perpetually from below by the most successful (and therefore, on the whole, the most capable) personages ; in a free Press, conducted in all its most powerful organs by men of character and of liberal education, I see safeguards against any American tyranny of numbers, even if an enlargement of the suffrage did degrade the general tone of the House of Commons as much as some expect.

As long, I believe, as the Throne, the House of Lords, and the Press, are what, thank God, they are, so long will each enlargement of the suffrage be a fresh source not of danger, but of safety ; for it will bind the masses to the established order of things by that loyalty which springs from content ; from the sense of being appreciated, trusted, dealt with not as children, but as men.

There are those who will consider such language as this especially ill-timed just now, in the face of Strikes and Trades' Union outrages. They point to these things as proofs of the unfitness of workmen for the suffrage ;

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they point especially to the late abominable murder at Sheffield, and ask, not without reason, would you give political power to men who would do that ?

Now that the Sheffield murder was in any wise planned or commanded by the Trades' Unions in general, I do not believe ; nor, I think, does any one else who knows aught of the British workman. If it was not, as some of the Sheffield men say, a private act of revenge, it was the act of only one or two Trades' Unions of that town, which are known ; and their conduct has been already reprobated and denounced by the other Trades' Unions of England. But there is no denying that the case as against the Trades' Unions is a heavy one. It is notorious that they have in past years planned and commanded illegal acts of violence. It is patent that they are too apt, from a false sense of class-honour, to connive at such now, instead of being, as they ought to be, the first to denounce them. The workmen will not see, that by combining in societies for certain purposes, they make those societies responsible for the good and lawful behaviour of all their members, in all acts tending to further those purposes, and are bound to say to every man joining the Trades' Union : ' You shall do nothing to carry out the objects which we have in view, save what is allowed by British Law.' They will not see that they are outraging the first principles of justice and freedom, by dictating to any man what wages he should receive, what master he shall work for, or any other condition which interferes with his rights as a free agent.

But, in the face of these facts (and very painful and disappointing they are to me), I will ask the upper classes : Do you believe that the average of Trades' Union members are capable of such villainies as that at Sheffield ? Do you believe that the average of them are given to violence or illegal acts at all, even though they may connive at such acts in their foolish and hasty fellows, by a false class-honour, not quite unknown, I should say, in certain learned and gallant professions ? Do you fancy that there are not in these Trades' Unions, tens of thousands of loyal, respectable, rational, patient men, as worthy of the suffrage

as any average borough voter ? If you do so, you really know nothing about the British workman. At least, you are confounding the workman of 1861 with the workman of 1831, and fancying that he alone, of all classes, has gained nothing by the increased education, civilisation, and political experience of thirty busy and prosperous years. You are unjust to the workman ; and more, you are unjust to your own class. For thirty years past, gentlemen and ladies of all shades of opinion have been labouring for and among the working classes, as no aristocracy on earth ever laboured before ; and do you suppose that all that labour has been in vain ? That it has bred in the working classes no increased reverence for law, no increased content with existing institutions, no increased confidence in the classes socially above them ? If so, you must have as poor an opinion of the capabilities of the upper classes, as you have of those of the lower.

So far from the misdoings of Trades' Unions being an argument against the extension of the suffrage, they are, in my opinion, an argument for it. I know that I am in a minority just now. I know that the common whisper is now, not especially of those who look for a Conservative reaction, that these Trades' Unions must be put down by strong measures : and I confess that I hear such language with terror. Punish, by all means, most severely, all individual offences against individual freedom, or personal safety ; but do not interfere, surely, with the Trades' Unions themselves. Do not try to bar these men of their right as free Englishmen to combine, if they choose, for what they consider their own benefit. Look upon these struggles between employers and employed as fair battles, in which, by virtue of the irreversible laws of political economy, the party who is in the right is almost certain to win ; and interfere in no wise, save to see fair play, and lawful means used on both sides alike. If you do more ; if you interfere in any wise with the Trades' Unions themselves, you will fail, and fail doubly. You will not prevent the existence of combinations : you will only make them secret, dark, revolutionary : you will

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demoralise the working man thereby as surely as the merchant is demoralised by being converted into a smuggler ; you will heap up indignation, spite, and wrath against the day of wrath ; and finally, to complete your own failure, you will drive the working man to demand an extension of the suffrage, in tones which will very certainly get a hearing. He cares, or seems to care, little about the suffrage now, just because he thinks that he can best serve his own interests by working these Trades' Unions. Take from him that means of redress (real or mistaken, no matter), and he will seek redress in a way in which you wish him still less to seek it, by demanding a vote and obtaining one.

That consummation, undesirable as it may seem to many, would perhaps be the best for the peace of the trades. These Trades' Unions, still tainted with some of the violence, secrecy, false political economy which they inherit from the evil times of 1830-40, last on simply, I believe, because the workman feels that they are his only organ, that he has no other means of making his wants and his opinions known to the British Government. Had he a vote, he believes (and I believe with him) he could send at least a few men to Parliament who would state his case fairly in the House of Commons, and would not only render a reason for him, but hear reason against him, if need were. He would be content with free discussion if he could get that. It is the feeling that he cannot get it that drives him often into crooked and dark ways. If any answer, that the representatives whom he would choose would be merely noisy demagogues, I believe them to be mistaken. No one can have watched the Preston strike, however much he may have disapproved, as I did, of the strike itself, without seeing from the temper, the self-restraint, the reasonableness, the chivalrous honour of the men, that they were as likely to choose a worthy member for the House of Commons as any town constituency in England ; no one can have watched the leaders of the working men for the last ten years without finding among them men capable of commanding the

attention and respect of the House of Commons, not merely by their eloquence, surprising as that is, but by their good sense, good feeling, and good breeding.

Some training at first, some rubbing off of angles, they might require ; though two at least I know, who would require no such training, and who would be ornaments to any House of Commons ; the most inexperienced of the rest would not give the House one-tenth the trouble which is given by a certain clique among the representatives of the sister Isle ; and would, moreover, learn his lesson in a week, instead of never learning it at all, like some we know too well. Yet Catholic emancipation has pacified Ireland, though it has brought into the House an inferior stamp of members ; and much more surely would an extension of the suffrage pacify the trades, while it would bring into the House a far superior stamp of member to those who compose the clique of which I have spoken.

But why, I hear some one say impatiently, talk about this subject of all others at this moment, when nobody, not even the working classes, cares about a Reform Bill ?

Because I am speaking to young men who have not yet entered public life ; and because I wish them to understand, that just because the question of parliamentary reform is in abeyance now, it will not be in abeyance ten years or twenty years hence. The question will be revived ere they are in the maturity of their manhood ; and they had best face that certain prospect, and learn to judge wisely and accurately on the subject before they are called on, as they will be, to act upon it. If it be true that the present generation has done all that it can do, or intends to do, towards the suffrage (and I have that confidence in our present rulers that I would submit without murmuring to their decision on the point), it is all the more incumbent on the rising generation to learn how to do (as assuredly they will have to do) the work which their fathers have left undone. The question may remain long in abeyance, under the influence of material prosperity such as the present ; or under the excitement of a war, as in Pitt's time ; but let a period of distress or

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disaster come, and it will be re-opened as of yore. The progress towards institutions more and more popular may be slow, but it is sure. Whenever any class has conceived the hope of being fairly represented, it is certain to fulfil its own hopes, unless it employs, or provokes, violence impossible in England. The thing will be. Let the young men of Britain take care that it is done rightly when it is done.

And how ought it to be done? That will depend upon any circumstances now future and uncertain. It will depend upon the pace at which sound education spreads among the working classes. It will depend, too, very much—I fear only too much—upon the attitude of the upper classes to the lower, in this very question of Trades' Unions and of Strikes. It will depend upon their attitude toward the unrepresented classes during the next few years, upon this very question of extended suffrage. And, therefore, I should advise, I had almost said entreat, any young men over whom I have any influence, to read and think freely and accurately upon the subject; taking, if I may propose to them a text-book, Mr. Mill's admirable treatise on 'Representative Government.' As for any theory of my own, if I had one I should not put it forward. How it will not be done, I can see clearly enough. It will not be done well by the old charter. It will not be done well by merely lowering the money qualification of electors. But it may be done well by other methods beside; and I can trust the freedom and soundness of the English mind to discover the best method of all, when it is needed.

Let, therefore, this 'Conservative Reaction' which I suspect is going on in the minds of many young men at Cambridge, consider what it has to conserve. It is not asked to conserve the Throne. That, thank God, can take good care of itself. Let it conserve the House of Lords; and that will be conserved just in proportion as the upper classes shall copy the virtues of Royalty; both of him who is taken from us, and of her who is left. Let the upper classes learn from them that the just and wise

method of strengthening their political power is to labour after that social power, which comes only by virtue and usefulness. Let them make themselves, as the present Sovereign has made herself, morally necessary to the people ; and then there is no fear of their being found politically unnecessary. No other course is before them, if they wish to make their 'Conservative Reaction' a permanent, even an endurable fact. If any young gentlemen fancy (and some do) that they can strengthen their class by making any secret alliance with the Throne against the masses, then they will discover rapidly that the sovereigns of the House of Brunswick are grown far too wise, and far too noble-hearted, to fall once more into that trap. If any of them (and some do) fancy that they can better their position by sneering, whether in public or in their club, at a Reformed House of Commons and a Free Press, they will only accelerate the results which they most dread, by forcing the ultra-liberal party of the House, and, what is even worse, the most intellectual and respectable portion of the Press, to appeal to the people against them ; and if again they are tempted (as too many of them are) to give up public life as becoming too vulgar for them, and prefer ease and pleasure to the hard work and plain-speaking of the House of Commons ; then they will simply pay the same penalty for laziness and fastidiousness which has been paid by the Spanish aristocracy ; and will discover that if they think their intellect unnecessary to the nation, the nation will rapidly become of the same opinion, and go its own way without them.

But if they are willing to make themselves, as they easily can, the best educated, the most trustworthy, the most virtuous, the most truly liberal-minded class of the commonweal ; if they will set themselves to study the duties of rank and property, as of a profession to which they are called by God, and the requirements of which they must fulfil ; if they will acquire, as they can easily, a sound knowledge both of political economy and of the social questions of the day ; if they will be foremost with

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their personal influence in all good works ; if they will set themselves to compete on equal terms with the classes below them, and, as they may, outrival them : then they will find that those classes will receive them not altogether on equal terms ; that they will accede to them a superiority, undefined, perhaps, but real and practical enough to conserve their class and their rank, in every article for which a just and prudent man would wish.

But if any young gentlemen look forward (as I fear a few do still) to a Conservative Reaction of any other kind than this ; to even the least return to the Tory maxims and methods of George the Fourth's time ; to even the least stoppage of what the world calls progress—which I should define as the putting in practice the results of inductive science ; then do they, like King Picrochole in Rabelais, look for a kingdom which shall be restored to them at the coming of the Cocqgrues. The Cocqgrues are never coming ; and none know that better than the present able and moderate leaders of the Conservative party ; none will be more anxious to teach that fact to their young adherents, and to make them swim with the great stream, lest it toss them contemptuously ashore upon its banks, and go on its way unheeding.

Return to the system of 1800-1830 is, I thank God, impossible. Even though men's hearts should fail them, they must onward, they know not whither : though God does know. The bigot who believes in a system, and not in the living God ; the sentimentalist, who shrinks from facts because they are painful to his taste ; the sluggard, who hates a change because it disturbs his ease ; the simply stupid person, who cannot use his eyes and ears ; all these may cry feebly to the world to do what it has never done since its creation—stand still awhile, that they may get their breaths. But the brave and honest gentleman—who believes that God is not the tempter and deceiver, but the father and the educator of man—he will not shrink, even though the pace may be at moments rapid, the path be at moments hid by mist ; for he will believe that freedom and knowledge, as well as virtue,

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are the daughters of the Most High ; and he will follow them and call on the rest to follow them, whithersoever they may lead ; and will take heart for himself and for his class, by the example of that great Prince who is of late gone home. For if, like that most royal soul, he and his shall follow with single eye and steadfast heart, freedom, knowledge, and virtue ; then will he and his be safe, as Royalty is safe in England now, because both God and man have need thereof.

PREFACE

Written in 1854

ADDRESSED TO THE WORKING MEN OF GREAT BRITAIN

MY FRIENDS—Since I wrote this book five years ago, I have seen a good deal of your class, and of their prospects. Much that I have seen has given me great hope ; much has disappointed me ; nothing has caused me to alter the opinions here laid down.

Much has given me hope ; especially in the North of England. I believe that there, at least, exists a mass of prudence, self-control, genial and sturdy manhood, which will be England's reserve-force for generations yet to come. The last five years, moreover, have certainly been years of progress for the good cause. The great drag upon it—namely, demagogism—has crumbled to pieces of its own accord ; and seems now only to exhibit itself in anilities like those of the speakers who inform a mob of boys and thieves that wheat has lately been thrown into the Thames to keep up prices, or advise them to establish, by means hitherto undiscovered, national granaries, only possible under the despotism of a Pharaoh. Since the 10th of April 1848 (one of the most lucky days which the English workman ever saw), the trade of the mob-orator has dwindled down to such last shifts as these, to which the working man sensibly seems merely to answer, ' Why will you still keep talking, Signor Benedick ? Nobody marks you.'

Alton Locke

But the 10th of April 1848 has been a beneficial crisis, not merely in the temper of the working men, so called, but in the minds of those who are denominated by them 'the aristocracy.' There is no doubt that the classes possessing property have been facing, since 1848, all social questions with an average of honesty, earnestness, and good feeling which has no parallel since the days of the Tudors, and that hundreds and thousands of 'gentlemen and ladies' in Great Britain now are saying, 'Show what we ought to do to be just to the workmen, and we will do it, whatsoever it costs.' They may not be always correct (though they generally are so) in their conceptions of what ought to be done; but their purpose is good and righteous; and those who hold it are daily increasing in number. The love of justice and mercy toward the handicraftsman is spreading rapidly, as it never did before in any nation upon earth; and if any man still represents the holders of property, as a class, as the enemies of those whom they employ, desiring their slavery and their ignorance, I believe that he is a liar and a child of the devil, and that he is at his father's old work, slandering and dividing between man and man. These words may be severe: but they are deliberate; and working men are, I hope, sufficiently accustomed to hear me call a spade a spade, when I am pleading for them, to allow me to do the same when I am pleading to them.

Of the disappointing experiences which I have had I shall say nothing, save in as far as I can, by alluding to them, point out to the working man the causes which still keep him weak: but I am bound to say that those disappointments have strengthened my conviction that this book, in the main, speaks the truth.

I do not allude, of course, to the thoughts and feelings of the hero. They are compounded of right and wrong, and such as I judged (and working men whom I am proud to number among my friends have assured me that I judged rightly) that a working man of genius would feel during the course of his self-education. These thoughts and feelings (often inconsistent and contradictory to each other), stupid or careless, or ill-willed persons, have represented as

To the Working Men of Great Britain

my own opinions, having, as it seems to me, turned the book upside down before they began to read it. I am bound to pay the working men, and their organs in the press, the compliment of saying that no such misrepresentations proceeded from them. However deeply some of them may have disagreed with me, all of them, as far as I have been able to judge, had sense to see what I meant ; and so, also, have the organs of the High-Church party, to whom, differing from them on many points, I am equally bound to offer my thanks for their fairness. But, indeed, the way in which this book, in spite of its crudities, has been received by persons of all ranks and opinions, who, instead of making me an offender for a word, have taken the book heartily and honestly, in the spirit and not in the letter, has made me most hopeful for the British mind, and given me a strong belief that, in spite of all foppery, luxury, covetousness, and unbelief, the English heart is still strong and genial, able and willing to do and suffer great things, as soon as the rational way of doing and suffering them becomes plain. Had I written this book merely to please my own fancy, this would be a paltry criterion, at once illogical and boastful ; but I wrote it, God knows, in the fear of God, that I might speak what seems to me the truth of God. I trusted in Him to justify me, in spite of my own youth, inexperience, hastiness, clumsiness ; and He has done it ; and, I trust, will do it to the end.

And now, what shall I say to you, my friends, about the future ? Your destiny is still in your own hands. For the last seven years you have let it slip through your fingers. If you are better off than you were in 1848, you owe it principally to those laws of political economy (as they are called), which I call the brute natural accidents of supply and demand, or to the exertions which have been made by upright men of the very classes whom demagogues taught you to consider as your natural enemies. Pardon me if I seem severe ; but, as old Aristotle has it, ‘Both parties being my friends, it is a sacred duty to honour truth first.’ And is this not the truth ? How

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little have the working men done to carry out that idea of association in which, in 1848-49, they were all willing to confess their salvation lay. Had the money which was wasted in the hapless Preston strike been wisely spent in relieving the labour market by emigration, or in making wages more valuable by enabling the workman to buy from co-operative stores and mills his necessities at little above cost price, how much sorrow and heart-burning might have been saved to the iron-trades. Had the real English endurance and courage which was wasted in that strike been employed in the cause of association, the men might have been, ere now, far happier than they are ever likely to be, without the least injury to the masters. What, again, has been done toward developing the organisation of the Trades' Unions into its true form, Association for distribution, from its old, useless, and savage form of Association for the purpose of resistance to masters—a war which is at first sight hopeless, even were it just, because the opposite party holds in his hand the supplies of his foe as well as his own, and therefore can starve him out at his leisure? What has been done, again, toward remedying the evils of the slop system, which this book especially exposed? The true method for the working men, if they wished to save their brothers and their brothers' wives and daughters from degradation, was to withdraw their custom from the slopsellers, and to deal, even at a temporary increase of price, with associate workmen. Have they done so? They can answer for themselves. In London (as in the country towns), the paltry temptation of buying in the cheapest market has still been too strong for the labouring man. In Scotland and in the North of England, thank God, the case has been very different; and to the North I must look still, as I did when I wrote *Alton Locke*, for the strong men in whose hands lies the destiny of the English handicraftsman.

God grant that the workmen of the South of England may bestir themselves ere it be too late, and discover that the only defence against want is self-restraint; the only defence against slavery, obedience to rule; and that,

To the Working Men of Great Britain

instead of giving themselves up, bound hand and foot, by their own fancy for a 'freedom' which is but selfish and conceited license, to the brute accidents of the competitive system, they may begin to organise among themselves associations for buying and selling the necessities of life, which may enable them to weather the dark season of high prices and stagnation, which is certain, sooner or later, to follow in the footsteps of war.

On politics I have little to say. My belief remains unchanged that true Christianity, and true monarchy also, are not only compatible with, but require as their necessary complement, true freedom for every man of every class; and that the Charter, now defunct, was just as wise and as righteous a 'Reform Bill' as any which England had yet had, or was likely to have. But I frankly say that my experience of the last five years gives me little hope of any great development of the true democratic principle in Britain, because it gives me little sign that the many are fit for it. Remember always that Democracy means a government not merely by numbers of isolated individuals, but by a Demos—by men accustomed to live in Demoi, or corporate bodies, and accustomed, therefore, to the self-control, obedience to law, and self-sacrificing public spirit, without which a corporate body cannot exist: But that a 'democracy' of mere numbers is no democracy, but a mere brute 'arithmocracy,' which is certain to degenerate into an 'ochlocracy,' or government by the mob, in which the numbers have no real share: an oligarchy of the fiercest, the noisiest, the rashest, and the most shameless, which is surely swallowed up either by a despotism, as in France, or as in Athens, by utter national ruin, and helpless slavery to a foreign invader. Let the workmen of Britain train themselves in the corporate spirit, and in the obedience and self-control which it brings, as they easily can in associations, and bear in mind always that only he who can obey is fit to rule; and then, when they are fit for it, the Charter may come, or things, I trust, far better than the Charter; and till they have done so, let them thank the just and merciful Heavens for

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keeping out of their hands any power, and for keeping off their shoulders any responsibility, which they would not be able to use aright. I thank God heartily, this day, that I have no share in the government of Great Britain ; and I advise my working friends to do the same, and to believe that, when they are fit to take their share therein, all the powers of earth cannot keep them from taking it ; and that, till then, happy is the man who does the duty which lies nearest him, who educates his family, raises his class, performs his daily work as to God and to his country, not merely to his employer and himself ; for it is only he that is faithful over a few things who will be made, or will be happy in being made, ruler over many things.

Yours ever,

C. K.

ALTON LOCKE

TAILOR AND POET

CHAPTER I

A POET'S CHILDHOOD

I AM a Cockney among Cockneys. Italy and the Tropics, the Highlands and Devonshire, I know only in dreams. Even the Surrey Hills, of whose loveliness I have heard so much, are to me a distant fairyland, whose gleaming ridges I am worthy only to behold afar. With the exception of two journeys, never to be forgotten, my knowledge of England is bounded by the horizon which encircles Richmond Hill.

My earliest recollections are of a suburban street ; of its jumble of little shops and little terraces, each exhibiting some fresh variety of capricious ugliness ; the little scraps of garden before the doors, with their dusty, stunted lilacs and balsam poplars, were my only forests ; my only wild animals, the dingy, merry spar, rows, who quarrelled fearlessly on my window-sill, ignorant of trap or gun. From my earliest childhood, through long nights of sleepless pain, as the midnight brightened into dawn, and the glaring lamps grew pale, I used to listen, with pleasant awe, to the ceaseless roll of the market-waggons, bringing up to the great city the treasures of the gay green country, the land of fruits and flowers, for which I have yearned all my life in vain. They seemed to my boyish fancy mysterious messengers from another world : the silent, lonely night, in which they were the only moving things, added to the wonder. I used to get out of bed to gaze at them, and envy the coarse men and sluttish women who attended them, their labour among verdant plants

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and rich brown mould, on breezy slopes, under God's own clear sky. I fancied that they learnt what I knew I should have learnt there; I knew not then that 'the eye only sees that which it brings with it the power of seeing.' When will their eyes be opened? When will priests go forth into the highways and the hedges, and preach to the ploughman and the gipsy the blessed news, that there too, in every thicket and fallow-field, is the house of God,—there, too, the gate of Heaven?

I do not complain that I am a Cockney. That, too, is God's gift. He made me one, that I might learn to feel for poor wretches who sit stifled in reeking garrets and workrooms, drinking in disease with every breath,—bound in their prison-house of brick and iron, with their own funeral pall hanging over them, in that canopy of fog and poisonous smoke, from their cradle to their grave. I have drunk of the cup of which they drink. And so I have learnt—if, indeed, I have learnt—to be a poet—a poet of the people. That honour, surely, was worth buying with asthma, and rickets, and consumption, and weakness, and—worst of all to me—with ugliness. It was God's purpose about me; and therefore, all circumstances combined to imprison me in London. I used once, when I worshipped circumstance, to fancy it my curse, Fate's injustice to me, which kept me from developing my genius, asserting my rank among poets. I longed to escape to glorious Italy, or some other southern climate, where natural beauty would have become the very element which I breathed; and yet, what would have come of that? Should I not, as nobler spirits than I have done, have idled away my life in Elysian dreams, singing out like a bird into the air, inarticulately, purposeless, for mere joy and fulness of heart; and taking no share in the terrible questionings, the terrible strugglings of this great, awful, blessed time—feeling no more the pulse of the great heart of England stirring me? I used, as I said, to call it the curse of circumstance that I was a sickly, decrepit Cockney. My mother used to tell me that it was the cross which God had given me to bear. I know

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now that she was right there. She used to say that my disease was God's will. I do not think, though, that she spoke right there also. I think that it was the will of the world and of the devil, of man's avarice and laziness and ignorance. And so would my readers, perhaps, had they seen the shop in the city where I was born and nursed, with its little garrets reeking with human breath, its kitchens and areas with noisome sewers. A sanitary reformer would not be long in guessing the cause of my unhealthiness. He would not rebuke me—nor would she, sweet soul! now that she is at rest and bliss—for my wild longings to escape, for my envying the very flies and sparrows their wings that I might flee miles away into the country, and breathe the air of heaven once, and die. I have had my wish. I have made two journeys far away into the country, and they have been enough for me.

My mother was a widow. My father, whom I cannot recollect, was a small retail tradesman in the City. He was unfortunate; and when he died, my mother came down, and lived penuriously enough, I knew not how till I grew older, down in that same suburban street. She had been brought up an Independent. After my father's death she became a Baptist, from conscientious scruples. She considered the Baptists, as I do, as the only sect who thoroughly embody the Calvinistic doctrines. She held it, as I do, an absurd and impious thing for those who believe mankind to be children of the devil till they have been consciously 'converted,' to baptize unconscious infants and give them the sign of God's mercy on the mere chance of that mercy being intended for them. When God had proved, by converting them, that they were not reprobate and doomed to hell by His absolute eternal will, then, and not till then, dare man baptize them into His name. She dared not palm a presumptuous fiction on herself, and call it 'charity.' So, though we had both been christened during my father's lifetime, she purposed to have us rebaptized, if ever that happened—which, in her sense of the word, never happened, I am afraid, to me.

She gloried in her dissent; for she was sprung from

old Puritan blood, which had flowed again and again beneath the knife of Star-Chamber butchers, and on the battlefields of Naseby and Sedgemoor. And on winter evenings she used to sit with her Bible on her knee, while I and my little sister Susan stood beside her and listened to the stories of Gideon and Barak, and Samson and Jephthah, till her eye kindled up, and her thoughts passed forth from that old Hebrew time home into those English times, which she fancied, and not untruly, like them. And we used to shudder, and yet listen with a strange fascination, as she told us how her ancestor called his seven sons off their small Cambridge farm, and horsed and armed them himself to follow behind Cromwell, and smite kings and prelates with 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.' Whether she were right or wrong, what is it to me? What is it now to her, thank God? But those stories, and the strict, stern, Puritan education, learnt from the Independents and not the Baptists, which accompanied them, had their effect on me for good and ill.

My mother moved by rule and method; by God's law, as she considered, and that only. She seldom smiled. Her word was absolute. She never commanded twice, without punishing. And yet there were abysses of unspoken tenderness in her, as well as clear, sound, womanly sense and insight. But she thought herself as much bound to keep down all tenderness as if she had been some ascetic of the middle ages—so do extremes meet! It was 'carnal,' she considered. She had as yet no right to have any 'spiritual affection' for us. We were still 'children of wrath and of the devil,'—not yet 'convinced of sin,' 'converted, born again.' She had no more spiritual bond with us, she thought, than she had with a heathen or a Papist. She dared not even pray for our conversion, earnestly as she prayed on every other subject. For though the majority of her sect would have done so, her clear logical sense would yield to no such tender inconsistency. Had it not been decided from all eternity? We were elect, or we were reprobate. Could her prayers alter that? If He had chosen us, He would

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call us in His own good time : and, if not——. Only again and again, as I afterwards discovered from a journal of hers, she used to beseech God with agonised tears to set her mind at rest by revealing to her His will towards us. For that comfort she could at least rationally pray. But she received no answer. Poor, beloved mother ! If thou couldst not read the answer, written in every flower and every sunbeam, written in the very fact of our existence here at all, what answer would have sufficed thee ?

And yet, with all this, she kept the strictest watch over our morality. Fear, of course, was the only motive she employed ; for how could our still carnal understandings be affected with love to God ? And love to herself was too paltry and temporary to be urged by one who knew that her life was uncertain, and who was always trying to go down to the deepest eternal ground and reason of everything, and take her stand upon that. So our god, or gods rather, till we were twelve years old, were hell, the rod, the ten commandments, and public opinion. Yet under them, not they, but something deeper far, both in her and us, preserved us pure. Call it natural character, conformation of the spirit,—conformation of the brain, if you like, if you are a scientific man and a phrenologist. I never yet could dissect and map out my own being, or my neighbour's, as you analysts do. To me, I myself, ay, and each person round me, seem one inexplicable whole ; to take away a single faculty whereof, is to destroy the harmony, the meaning, the life of all the rest. That there is a duality in us—a lifelong battle between flesh and spirit—we all, alas ! know well enough ; but which is flesh and which is spirit, what philosophers in these days can tell us ? Still less had we two found out any such duality or discord in ourselves ; for we were gentle and obedient children. The pleasures of the world did not tempt us. We did not know of their existence ; and no foundlings educated in a nunnery ever grew up in a more virginal and spotless innocence—if ignorance be such—than did Susan and I.

The narrowness of my sphere of observation only

concentrated the faculty into greater strength. The few natural objects which I met—and they, of course, constituted my whole outer world (for art and poetry were tabooed both by my rank and my mother's sectarianism, and the study of human beings only develops itself as the boy grows into the man)—these few natural objects, I say, I studied with intense keenness. I knew every leaf and flower in the little front garden; every cabbage and rhubarb plant in Battersea fields was wonderful and beautiful to me. Clouds and water I learned to delight in, from my occasional lingerings on Battersea bridge, and yearning westward looks toward the sun setting above rich meadows and wooded gardens, to me a forbidden El Dorado.

I brought home wild-flowers and chance beetles and butterflies, and pored over them, not in the spirit of a naturalist, but of a poet. They were to me God's angels shining in coats of mail and fairy masquerading dresses. I envied them their beauty, their freedom. At last I made up my mind, in the simple tenderness of a child's conscience, that it was wrong to rob them of the liberty for which I pined,—to take them away from the beautiful broad country whither I longed to follow them; and I used to keep them a day or two, and then, regretfully, carry them back, and set them loose on the first opportunity, with many compunctions of heart, when, as generally happened, they had been starved to death in the meantime.

They were my only recreations after the hours of the small day-school at the neighbouring chapel, where I learnt to read, write, and sum; except, now and then, a London walk, with my mother holding my hand tight the whole way. She would have hoodwinked me, stopped my ears with cotton, and led me in a string,—kind, careful soul!—if it had been reasonably safe on a crowded pavement, so fearful was she lest I should be polluted by some chance sight or sound of the Babylon which she feared and hated—almost as much as she did the Bishops.

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The only books which I knew were the *Pilgrim's Progress* and the Bible. The former was my Shakespeare, my Dante, my Vedas, by which I explained every fact and phenomenon of life. London was the City of Destruction, from which I was to flee ; I was Christian ; the Wicket of the Way of Life I had strangely identified with the turnpike at Battersea-bridge end ; and the rising ground of Mortlake and Wimbledon was the Land of Beulah—the Enchanted Mountains of the Shepherds. If I could once get there I was saved : a carnal view, perhaps, and a childish one ; but there was a dim meaning and human reality in it nevertheless.

As for the Bible, I knew nothing of it really, beyond the Old Testament. Indeed, the life of Christ had little chance of becoming interesting to me. My mother had given me formally to understand that it spoke of matters too deep for me ; that 'till converted, the natural man could not understand the things of God' : and I obtained little more explanation of it from the two unintelligible, dreary sermons to which I listened every dreary Sunday, in terror lest a chance shuffle of my feet, or a hint of drowsiness,—natural result of the stifling gallery and glaring windows and gaslights,—should bring down a lecture and a punishment when I returned home. Oh, those 'Sabbaths' !—days, not of rest, but utter weariness, when the beetles and the flowers were put by, and there was nothing to fill up the long vacuity but books of which I could not understand a word : when play, laughter, or even a stare out of window at the sinful, merry, Sabbath-breaking promenaders, were all forbidden, as if the commandment had run, 'In it thou shalt take no manner of amusement, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter.' By what strange ascetic perversion has *that* got to mean 'keeping holy the Sabbath Day' ?

Yet there was an hour's relief in the evening, when either my mother told us Old Testament stories, or some preacher or two came in to supper after meeting ; and I used to sit in the corner and listen to their talk ; not that I understood a word, but the mere struggle to understand

—the mere watching my mother's earnest face—my pride in the reverent flattery with which the worthy men addressed her as 'a mother in Israel,' were enough to fill up the blank for me till bedtime.

Of 'vital Christianity' I heard much; but, with all my efforts, could find out nothing. Indeed, it did not seem interesting enough to tempt me to find out much. It seemed a set of doctrines, believing in which was to have a magical effect on people, by saving them from the everlasting torture due to sins and temptations which I had never felt. Now and then, believing, in obedience to my mother's assurances, and the solemn prayers of the ministers about me, that I was a child of hell, and a lost and miserable sinner, I used to have accesses of terror, and fancy that I should surely wake next morning in everlasting flames. Once I put my finger a moment into the fire, as certain Papists, and Protestants too, have done, not only to themselves, but to their disciples, to see if it would be so very dreadfully painful; with what conclusions the reader may judge. . . . Still, I could not keep up the excitement. Why should I? The fear of pain is not the fear of sin, that I know of; and, indeed, the thing was unreal altogether in my case, and my heart, my common sense, rebelled against it again and again; till at last I got a terrible whipping for taking my little sister's part, and saying that if she was to die,—so gentle, and obedient, and affectionate as she was,—God would be very unjust in sending her to hell-fire, and that I was quite certain He would do no such thing—unless He were the Devil: an opinion which I have since seen no reason to change. The confusion between the King of Hell and the King of Heaven has cleared up, thank God, since then!

So I was whipped and put to bed—the whipping altering my secret heart just about as much as the dread of hell-fire did.

I speak as a Christian man—an orthodox Churchman (if you require that shibboleth). Was I so very wrong? What was there in the idea of religion which was repre-

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sented to me at home to captivate me? What was the use of a child's hearing of 'God's great love manifested in the scheme of redemption,' when he heard, in the same breath, that the effects of that redemption were practically confined only to one human being out of a thousand, and that the other nine hundred and ninety-nine were lost and damned from their birth-hour to all eternity—not only by the absolute will and reprobation of God (though that infernal blasphemy I heard often enough), but also, putting that out of the question, by the mere fact of being born of Adam's race? And this to a generation to whom God's love shines out in every tree and flower and hedge-side bird; to whom the daily discoveries of science are revealing that love in every microscopic animalcule which peoples the stagnant pool! This to working men, whose craving is only for some idea which shall give equal hopes, claims, and deliverances, to all mankind alike! This to working men, who, in the smiles of their innocent children, see the heaven which they have lost—the messages of baby-cherubs, made in God's own image! This to me, to whom every butterfly, every look at my little sister, contradicted the lie! You may say that such thoughts were too deep for a child; that I am ascribing to my boyhood the scepticism of my manhood; but it is not so; and what went on in my mind goes on in the minds of thousands. It is the cause of the contempt into which not merely sectarian Protestantism, but Christianity altogether, has fallen in the minds of the thinking workmen. Clergymen, who anathematise us for wandering into Unitarianism—you, you have driven us thither. You must find some explanation of the facts of Christianity more in accordance with the truths which we do know, and will live and die for, or you can never hope to make us Christians; or, if we do return to the true fold, it will be as I returned, after long, miserable years of darkling error, to a higher truth than most of you have yet learned to preach.

But those old Jewish heroes did fill my whole heart and soul. I learnt from them lessons which I never wish to unlearn. Whatever else I saw about them, this I saw,

—that they were patriots, deliverers from that tyranny and injustice from which the child's heart,—‘child of the devil’ though you may call him,—instinctively, and, as I believe, by a divine inspiration, revolts. Moses leading his people out of Egypt ; Gideon, Barak, and Samson, slaying their oppressors ; David, hiding in the mountains from the tyrant, with his little band of those who had fled from the oppressions of an aristocracy of Nabals ; Jehu, executing God's vengeance on the kings—they were my heroes, my models ; they mixed themselves up with the dim legends about the Reformation martyrs, Cromwell and Hampden, Sidney and Monmouth, which I had heard at my mother's knee. Not that the perennial oppression of the masses, in all ages and countries, had yet risen on me as an awful, torturing, fixed idea. I fancied, poor fool ! that tyranny was the exception, and not the rule. But it was the mere sense of abstract pity and justice which was delighted in me. I thought that these were old fairy tales, such as never need be realised again. I learnt otherwise in after years.

I have often wondered since, why all cannot read the same lesson as I did in those old Hebrew Scriptures—that they, of all books in the world, have been wrested into proofs of the divine right of kings, the eternal necessity of slavery ! But the eye only sees what it brings with it the power of seeing. The upper classes, from their first day at school, to their last day at college, read of nothing but the glories of Salamis and Marathon, of freedom and of the old republics. And what comes of it ? No more than their tutors know will come of it, when they thrust into the boys' hands books which give the lie in every page to their own political superstitions.

But when I was just turned of thirteen, an altogether new fairy-land was opened to me by some missionary tracts and journals, which were lent to my mother by the ministers. Pacific coral islands and volcanoes, cocoa-nut groves and bananas, graceful savages with paint and feathers—what an El Dorado ! How I devoured them and dreamt of them, and went there in fancy, and

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preached small sermons as I lay in my bed at night to Tahitians and New Zealanders, though I confess my spiritual eyes were, just as my physical eyes would have been, far more busy with the scenery than with the souls of my audience. However, that was the place for me, I saw clearly. And one day, I recollect it well, in the little dingy, foul, reeking, twelve foot square back-yard, where huge smoky party-walls shut out every breath of air and almost all the light of heaven, I had climbed up between the water-butt and the angle of the wall for the purpose of fishing out of the dirty fluid which lay there, crusted with soot and alive with insects, to be renewed only three times in the seven days, some of the great larvæ and kicking monsters which made up a large item in my list of wonders : all of a sudden the horror of the place came over me ; those grim prison-walls above, with their canopy of lurid smoke ; the dreary, sloppy, broken pavement ; the horrible stench of the stagnant cesspools ; the utter want of form, colour, life, in the whole place, crushed me down, without my being able to analyse my feelings as I can now ; and then came over me that dream of Pacific Islands, and the free, open sea ; and I slid down from my perch, and bursting into tears threw myself upon my knees in the court, and prayed aloud to God to let me be a missionary.

Half fearfully I let out my wishes to my mother when she came home. She gave me no answer ; but, as I found out afterwards,—too late, alas ! for her, if not for me,—she, like Mary, had ‘laid up all these things, and treasured them in her heart.’

You may guess, then, my delight when, a few days afterwards, I heard that a real live missionary was coming to take tea with us. A man who had actually been in New Zealand !—the thought was rapture. I painted him to myself over and over again ; and when, after the first burst of fancy, I recollected that he might possibly not have adopted the native costume of that island, or, if he had, that perhaps it would look too strange for him to wear it about London, I settled within myself that he was

to be a tall, venerable-looking man, like the portraits of old Puritan divines which adorned our day-room ; and as I had heard that 'he was powerful in prayer,' I adorned his right hand with that mystic weapon 'all-prayer,' with which Christian, when all other means have failed, finally vanquishes the fiend—which instrument, in my mind, was somewhat after the model of an infernal sort of bill or halbert—all hooks, edges, spikes, and crescents—which I had passed, shuddering, once, in the hand of an old suit of armour in Wardour Street.

He came—and with him the two ministers who often drank tea with my mother ; both of whom, as they played some small part in the drama of my after-life, I may as well describe here. The elder was a little, sleek, silver-haired old man, with a blank, weak face, just like a white rabbit. He loved me, and I loved him too, for there were always lollipops in his pocket for me and Susan. Had his head been equal to his heart !—but what has been was to be—and the dissenting clergy, with a few noble exceptions among the Independents, are not the strong men of the day—none know that better than the workmen. The old man's name was Bowyer. The other, Mr. Wigginton, was a younger man ; tall, grim, dark, bilious, with a narrow forehead, retreating suddenly from his eyebrows up to a conical peak of black hair over his ears. He preached 'higher doctrine,' *i.e.* more fatalist and antinomian than his gentler colleague,—and, having also a stentorian voice, was much the greater favourite at the chapel. I hated him—and if any man ever deserved hatred, he did.

Well, they came. My heart was in my mouth as I opened the door to them, and sank back again to the very lowest depths of my inner man when my eyes fell on the face and figure of the missionary—a squat, red-faced, pig-eyed, low-browed man, with great soft lips that opened back to his very ears : sensuality, conceit, and cunning marked on every feature—an innate vulgarity, from which the artisan and the child recoil with an instinct as true, perhaps truer, than that of the courtier, showing itself in

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every tone and motion—I shrank into a corner, so crest-fallen that I could not even exert myself to hand round the bread and butter, for which I got duly scolded afterwards. Oh! that man!—how he bawled and contradicted, and laid down the law, and spoke to my mother in a fondling, patronising way, which made me, I knew not why, boil over with jealousy and indignation. How he filled his teacup half full of the white sugar to buy which my mother had curtailed her yesterday's dinner—how he drained the few remaining drops of the three-pennyworth of cream, with which Susan was stealing off to keep it as an unexpected treat for my mother at breakfast the next morning—how he talked of the natives, not as St. Paul might of his converts, but as a planter might of his slaves; overlaying all his unintentional confessions of his own greed and prosperity, with cant, flimsy enough for even a boy to see through, while his eyes were not blinded with the superstition that a man must be pious who sufficiently interlards his speech with a jumble of old English picked out of our translation of the New Testament. Such was the man I saw. I don't deny that all are not like him. I believe there are noble men of all denominations, doing their best according to their light, all over the world; but such was the one I saw—and the men who were sent home to plead the missionary cause, whatever the men may be like who stay behind and work, are, from my small experience, too often such. It appears to me to be the rule that many of those who go abroad as missionaries, go simply because they are men of such inferior powers and attainments that if they stayed in England they would starve.

Three parts of his conversation, after all, was made up of abuse of the missionaries of the Church of England, not for doing nothing, but for being so much more successful than his own sect; accusing them, in the same breath, of being just of the inferior type of which he was himself, and also of being mere University fine gentlemen. Really, I do not wonder, upon his own showing, at the savages preferring them to him; and I was pleased to hear the old white-headed minister gently interpose at the end

of one of his tirades—‘We must not be jealous, my brother, if the Establishment has discovered what we, I hope, shall find out some day, that it is not wise to draft our missionaries from the offscouring of the ministry, and serve God with that which costs us nothing except the expense of providing for them beyond seas.’

There was somewhat of roguish twinkle in the old man’s eye as he said it, which emboldened me to whisper a question to him.

‘Why is it, sir, that in olden times the heathens used to crucify the missionaries and burn them, and now they give them beautiful farms, and build them houses, and carry them about on their backs?’

The old man seemed a little puzzled, and so did the company, to whom he smilingly retailed my question.

As nobody seemed inclined to offer a solution, I ventured one myself.

‘Perhaps the heathens are grown better than they used to be?’

‘The heart of man,’ answered the tall, dark minister, ‘is, and ever was, equally at enmity with God.’

‘Then, perhaps,’ I ventured again, ‘what the missionaries preach now is not quite the same as what the missionaries used to preach in St. Paul’s time, and so the heathens are not so angry at it?’

My mother looked thunder at me, and so did all except my white-headed friend, who said, gently enough—

‘It may be that the child’s words come from God.’

Whether they did or not, the child took very good care to speak no more words till he was alone with his mother; and then finished off that disastrous evening by a punishment for the indecency of saying, before his little sister, that he thought it ‘a great pity the missionaries taught black people to wear ugly coats and trousers; they must have looked so much handsomer running about with nothing on but feathers and strings of shells.’

So the missionary dream died out of me, by a foolish and illogical antipathy enough; though, after all, it was a child of my imagination only, not of my heart; and the

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fancy, having bred it, was able to kill it also. And David became my ideal. To be a shepherd-boy, and sit among beautiful mountains, and sing hymns of my own making, and kill lions and bears, with now and then the chance of a stray giant—what a glorious life ! And if David slew giants with a sling and a stone, why should not I ?—at all events, one ought to know how ; so I made a sling out of an old garter and some string, and began to practise in the little back-yard. But my first shot broke a neighbour's window, value sevenpence, and the next flew back in my face, and cut my head open ; so I was sent supperless to bed for a week, till the sevenpence had been duly saved out of my hungry stomach—and, on the whole, I found the hymn-writing side of David's character the more feasible ; so I tried, and with much brains-beating, committed the following lines to a scrap of dirty paper. And it was strangely significant, that in this, my first attempt, there was an instinctive denial of the very doctrine of 'particular redemption,' which I had been hearing all my life, and an instinctive yearning after the very Being in whom I had been told I had 'no part nor lot' till I was 'converted.' Here they are. I am not ashamed to call them—doggerel though they be—an inspiration from Him of whom they speak. If not from Him, good readers, from whom ?

Jesus, He loves one and all ;
Jesus, He loves children small ;
Their souls are sitting round His feet,
On high, before His mercy-seat.

When on earth He walked in shame,
Children small unto Him came :
At His feet they knelt and prayed,
On their heads His hands He laid.

Came a spirit on them then,
Greater than of mighty men ;
A spirit gentle, meek, and mild,
A spirit good for king and child.

Oh ! that spirit give to me,
Jesus, Lord, where'er I be !
So——

But I did not finish them, not seeing very clearly what to do with that spirit when I obtained it ; for, indeed, it seemed a much finer thing to fight material Apollyons with material swords of iron, like my friend Christian, or to go bear and lion hunting with David, than to convert heathens by meekness—at least, if true meekness was at all like that of the missionary whom I had lately seen.

I showed the verses in secret to my little sister. My mother heard us singing them together, and extorted, grimly enough, a confession of the authorship. I expected to be punished for them (I was accustomed weekly to be punished for all sorts of deeds and words, of the harmfulness of which I had not a notion). It was, therefore, an agreeable surprise when the old minister, the next Sunday evening, patted my head, and praised me for them.

‘A hopeful sign of young grace, brother,’ said he to the dark tall man. ‘May we behold here an infant Timothy!’

‘Bad doctrine, brother, in that first line—bad doctrine, which I am sure he did not learn from our excellent sister here. Remember, my boy, henceforth, that Jesus does *not* love one and all—not that I am angry with you. The carnal mind cannot be expected to understand divine things, any more than the beasts that perish. Nevertheless, the blessed message of the Gospel stands true, that Christ loves none but His Bride the Church. His merits, my poor child, extend to none but the elect. Ah! my dear sister Locke, how delightful to think of the narrow way of discriminating grace! How it enhances the believer’s view of his own exceeding privileges, to remember that there be few that be saved!’

I said nothing. I thought myself only too lucky to escape so well from the danger of having done anything out of my own head. But somehow Susan and I never altered it when we sang it to ourselves.

I thought it necessary for the sake of those who might read my story, to string together these few scattered recollections of my boyhood,—to give, as it were, some sample

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of the cotyledon leaves of my young life-plant, and of the soil in which it took root, ere it was transplanted—but I will not forestall my sorrows. After all, they have been but types of the woes of thousands who ‘die and give no sign.’ Those to whom the struggles of every, even the meanest, human being are scenes of an awful drama, every incident of which is to be noted with reverent interest, will not find them void of meaning ; while the life which opens in my next chapter is, perhaps, full enough of mere dramatic interest (and whose life is not, were it but truly written ?) to amuse merely as a novel. Ay, grim and real is the action and suffering which begins with my next page,—as you yourself would have found, high-born reader (if such chance to light upon this story), had you found yourself at fifteen, after a youth of convent-like seclusion, settled, apparently for life—in a tailor’s workshop.

Ay—laugh !—we tailors can quote poetry as well as make your court-dresses—

You sit in a cloud and sing, like pictured angels,
And say the world runs smooth—while right below
Welters the black fermenting heap of griefs
Whereon your state is built. . . .

CHAPTER II

THE TAILOR'S WORKROOM

HAVE you done laughing? Then I will tell you how the thing came to pass.

My father had a brother, who had steadily risen in life, in proportion as my father fell. They had both begun life in a grocer's shop. My father saved enough to marry when of middle age, a woman of his own years, and set up a little shop, where there were far too many such already, in the hope—to him as to the rest of the world, quite just and innocent—of drawing away as much as possible of his neighbours' custom. He failed, died—as so many small tradesmen do—of bad debts and a broken heart, and left us beggars. His brother, more prudent, had, in the meantime, risen to be foreman; then he married, on the strength of his handsome person, his master's blooming widow; and rose and rose, year by year, till, at the time of which I speak, he was owner of a first-rate grocery establishment in the City, and a pleasant villa near Herne Hill, and had a son, a year or two older than myself, at King's College, preparing for Cambridge and the Church—that being nowadays the approved method of converting a tradesman's son into a gentleman,—whereof let artisans, and gentlemen also, take note.

My aristocratic readers—if I ever get any, which I pray God I may—may be surprised at so great an inequality of fortune between two cousins; but the thing is common in our class. In the higher ranks, a difference

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in income implies none in education or manners, and the poor 'gentleman' is a fit companion for dukes and princes—thanks to the old usages of Norman chivalry, which after all were a democratic protest against the sovereignty, if not of rank, at least of money. The knight, however penniless, was the prince's equal, even his superior, from whose hands he must receive knighthood; and the 'squire of low degree,' who honourably earned his spurs, rose also into that guild, whose qualifications, however barbaric, were still higher ones than any which the pocket gives. But in the commercial classes money most truly and fearfully 'makes the man.' A difference in income, as you go lower, makes more and more difference in the supply of the common necessities of life; and worse—in education and manners, in all which polishes the man, till you may see often, as in my case, one cousin a Cambridge undergraduate, and the other a tailor's journeyman.

My uncle one day came down to visit us, resplendent in a black velvet waistcoat, thick gold chain, and acres of shirt-front; and I and Susan were turned to feed on our own curiosity and awe in the back-yard, while he and my mother were closeted together for an hour or so in the living-room. When he was gone, my mother called me in, and with eyes which would have been tearful had she allowed herself such a weakness before us, told me very solemnly and slowly, as if to impress upon me the awfulness of the matter, that I was to be sent to a tailor's workrooms the next day.

And an awful step it was in her eyes, as she laid her hands on my head and murmured to herself, 'Behold, I send you forth as a lamb in the midst of wolves. Be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.' And then, rising hastily to conceal her own emotion, fled upstairs, where we could hear her throw herself on her knees by the bedside, and sob piteously.

That evening was spent dolefully enough, in a sermon of warnings against all manner of sins and temptations, the very names of which I had never heard, but to which,

as she informed me, I was by my fallen nature altogether prone : and right enough was she in so saying, though, as often happens, the temptations from which I was in real danger were just the ones of which she had no notion—fighting more or less extinct Satans, as Mr. Carlyle says, and quite unconscious of the real, modern, man-devouring Satan close at her elbow.

To me, in spite of all the terror which she tried to awaken in me, the change was not unwelcome ; at all events, it promised me food for my eyes and my ears,—some escape from the narrow cage in which, though I hardly dare confess it to myself, I was beginning to pine. Little I dreamt to what a darker cage I was to be translated ! Not that I accuse my uncle of neglect or cruelty, though the thing was altogether of his commanding. He was as generous to us as society required him to be. We were entirely dependent on him, as my mother told me then for the first time, for support. And had he not a right to dispose of my person, having bought it by an allowance to my mother of five-and-twenty pounds a year ? I did not forget that fact ; the thought of my dependence on him rankled in me, till it almost bred hatred in me to a man who had certainly never done or meant anything to me but in kindness. For what could he make me but a tailor—or a shoemaker ? A pale, consumptive, rickety, weakly boy, all forehead and no muscle—have not clothes and shoes been from time immemorial the appointed work of such ? The fact that that weakly frame is generally compensated by a proportionally increased activity of brain, is too unimportant to enter into the calculations of the great King *Laissez-faire*. Well, my dear Society, it is you that suffer for the mistake, after all, more than we. If you do tether your cleverest artisans on tailors' shopboards and cobblers' benches, and they—as sedentary folk will—fall a-thinking, and come to strange conclusions thereby, they really ought to be much more thankful to you than you are to them. If Thomas Cooper had passed his first five-and-twenty years at the plough tail instead of the shoemaker's awl, many words would have been left unsaid

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which, once spoken, working men are not likely to forget.

With a beating heart I shambled along by my mother's side next day to Mr. Smith's shop, in a street off Piccadilly ; and stood by her side, just within the door, waiting till some one would condescend to speak to us, and wondering when the time would come when I, like the gentleman who skipped up and down the shop, should shine glorious in patent-leather boots, and a blue satin tie sprigged with gold.

Two personages, both equally magnificent, stood talking with their backs to us ; and my mother, in doubt, like myself, as to which of them was the tailor, at last summoned up courage to address the wrong one, by asking if he were Mr. Smith.

The person addressed answered by a most polite smile and bow, and assured her that he had not that honour ; while the other he-he'ed, evidently a little flattered by the mistake, and then uttered in a tremendous voice these words :

'I have nothing for you, my good woman—go. Mr. Elliot ! how did you come to allow these people to get into the establishment ?'

'My name is Locke, sir, and I was to bring my son here this morning.'

'Oh—ah !—Mr. Elliot, see to these persons. As I was saying, my lard, the crimson velvet suit, about thirty-five guineas. By the bye, that coat ours ? I thought so—idea grand and light—masses well broken—very fine chiaroscuro about the whole—an aristocratic wrinkle just above the hips—which I flatter myself no one but myself and my friend Mr. Cooke really do understand. The vapid smoothness of the door dummy, my lard, should be confined to the regions of the Strand. Mr. Elliot, where are you ? Just be so good as to show his lardship that lovely new thing in drab and *bleu foncé*. Ah ! your lardship can't wait.—Now, my good woman, is this the young man ?'

'Yes,' said my mother : 'and—and—God deal so with you, sir, as you deal with the widow and the orphan.'

‘Oh—ah—that will depend very much, I should say, on how the widow and the orphan deal with me. Mr. Elliot, take this person into the office and transact the little formalities with her. Jones, take the young man upstairs to the workroom.’

I stumbled after Mr. Jones up a dark, narrow, iron staircase till we emerged through a trap-door into a garret at the top of the house. I recoiled with disgust at the scene before me ; and here I was to work—perhaps through life ! A low lean-to room, stifling me with the combined odours of human breath and perspiration, stale beer, the sweet sickly smell of gin, and the sour and hardly less disgusting one of new cloth. On the floor, thick with dust and dirt, scraps of stuff and ends of thread, sat some dozen haggard, untidy, shoeless men, with a mingled look of care and recklessness that made me shudder. The windows were tight closed to keep out the cold winter air ; and the condensed breath ran in streams down the panes, chequering the dreary outlook of chimney-tops and smoke. The conductor handed me over to one of the men.

‘Here, Crossthwaite, take this youngster and make a tailor of him. Keep him next you, and prick him up with your needle if he shirks.’

He disappeared down the trap-door, and mechanically, as if in a dream, I sat down by the man and listened to his instructions, kindly enough bestowed. But I did not remain in peace two minutes. A burst of chatter rose as the foreman vanished, and a tall, bloated, sharp-nosed young man next me bawled in my ear—

‘I say, young’un, fork out the tin and pay your footing at Consumption Hospital.’

‘What do you mean ?’

‘Ain’t he just green ?—Down with the stumpy—a tizzy for a pot of half-and-half.’

‘I never drink beer.’

‘Then never do,’ whispered the man by my side ; ‘as sure as hell’s hell, it’s your only chance.’

There was a fierce, deep earnestness in the tone which

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made me look up at the speaker, but the other instantly chimed in—

‘Oh, yer don’t, don’t yer, my young Father Mathy? then yer’ll soon learn it here if yer want to keep yer victuals down.’

‘And I have promised to take my wages home to my mother.’

‘Oh criminy! hark to that, my coves! here’s a chap as is going to take the blunt home to his mammy.’

‘Tain’t much of it the old ’un ’ll see,’ said another. ‘Ven yer pockets it at the Cock and Bottle, my kiddy, yer won’t find much of it left o’ Sunday mornings.’

‘Don’t his mother know he’s out?’ asked another, ‘and won’t she know it—

‘Ven he’s sitting in his glory
Half price at the Victory.

Oh! no, ve never mentions her—her name is never heard. Certainly not, by no means. Why should it?’

‘Well, if yer won’t stand a pot,’ quoth the tall man, ‘I will, that’s all, and blow temperance. “A short life and a merry one,” says the tailor—

‘The ministers talk a great deal about port,
And they makes Cape wine very dear,
But blow their hi’s if ever they tries
To deprive a poor cove of his beer.

Here, Sam, run to the Cock and Bottle for a pot of half-and-half to my score.’

A thin, pale lad jumped up and vanished, while my tormentor turned to me—

‘I say, young ’un, do you know why we’re nearer heaven here than our neighbours?’

‘I shouldn’t have thought so,’ answered I with a *naïveté* which raised a laugh, and dashed the tall man for a moment.

‘Yer don’t? then I’ll tell yer. A cause we’re a top of the house in the first place, and next place yer’ll die here six months sooner nor if yer worked in the room

below. Ain't that logic and science, Orator?' appealing to Crossthwaite.

'Why?' asked I.

'A cause you get all the other floors' stinks up here as well as your own. Concentrated essence of man's flesh is this here as you're breathing. Cellar workroom we calls Rheumatic Ward, because of the damp. Ground-floors Fever Ward—them as don't get typhus gets dysentery, and them as don't get dysentery gets typhus—your nose 'd tell yer why if you opened the back windy. First floor's Ashmy Ward—don't you hear 'um now through the cracks in the boards, a-puffing away like a nest of young locomotives? And this here most august and uppercrust cockloft is the Conscriptive Hospital. First you begins to cough, then you proceeds to expectorate—spittoons, as you see, perwided free gracious for nothing—fined a kivarten if you spits on the floor—

'Then your cheeks they grows red, and your nose it grows thin,
And your bones they stick out, till they comes through your skin :

and then, when you've sufficiently covered the poor dear shivering bare backs of the hairystocracy—

'Die, die, die,
Away you fly,
Your soul is in the sky !

as the hinspired Shakespeare wittily remarks.'

And the ribald lay down on his back, stretched himself out, and pretended to die in a fit of coughing, which last was, alas! no counterfeit, while poor I, shocked and bewildered, let my tears fall fast upon my knees.

'Fine him a pot!' roared one, 'for talking about kicking the bucket. He's a nice young man to keep a cove's spirits up, and talk about "a short life and a merry one." Here comes the heavy. Hand it here to take the taste of that fellow's talk out of my mouth.'

'Well, my young 'un,' recommenced my tormentor, 'and how do you like your company?'

'Leave the boy alone,' growled Crossthwaite; 'don't you see he's crying?'

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‘Is that anything good to eat? Give me some on it if it is—it’ll save me washing my face.’ And he took hold of my hair and pulled my head back.

‘I’ll tell you what, Jemmy Downes,’ said Crossthwaite, in a voice which made him draw back, ‘if you don’t drop that, I’ll give you such a taste of my tongue as shall turn you blue.’

‘You’d better try it on then. Do—only just now—if you please.’

‘Be quiet, you fool!’ said another. ‘You’re a pretty fellow to chaff the orator. He’ll slang you up the chimney afore you can get your shoes on.’

‘Fine him a kivarten for quarrelling,’ cried another; and the bully subsided into a minute’s silence, after a *sotto voce*—‘Blow temperance, and blow all Chartists, say I!’ and then delivered himself of his feelings in a doggerel song—

‘Some folks leads coves a dance,
With their pledge of temperance,
And their plans for donkey sociation;
And their pockets full they crams
By their patriotic flams,
And then swears ’tis for the good of the nation.

‘But I don’t care two inions
For political opinions,
While I can stand my heavy and my quartern;
For to drown dull care within,
In baccy, beer, and gin,
Is the prime of a working-tailor’s fortin!

There’s common sense for yer now; hand the pot here.’

I recollect nothing more of that day, except that I bent myself to my work with assiduity enough to earn praises from Crossthwaite. It was to be done, and I did it. The only virtue I ever possessed (if virtue it be) is the power of absorbing my whole heart and mind in the pursuit of the moment, however dull or trivial, if there be good reason why it should be pursued at all.

I owe, too, an apology to my readers for introducing all this ribaldry. God knows, it is as little to my taste as it can be to theirs, but the thing exists; and those who

live, if not by, yet still beside such a state of things, ought to know what the men are like to whose labour, ay, life blood, they owe their luxuries. They are 'their brothers' keepers,' let them deny it as they will. Thank God, many are finding that out; and the morals of the working tailors, as well as of other classes of artisans, are rapidly improving: a change which has been brought about partly by the wisdom and kindness of a few master tailors, who have built workshops fit for human beings, and have resolutely stood out against the iniquitous and destructive alterations in the system of employment. Among them I may, and will, whether they like it or not, make honourable mention of Mr. Willis, of St. James's Street, and Mr. Stultz, of Bond Street.

But nine-tenths of the improvement has been owing, not to the masters, but to the men themselves; and who among them, my aristocratic readers, do you think, have been the great preachers and practisers of temperance, thrift, charity, self-respect, and education. Who?—shriek not in your Belgravian saloons—the Chartists; the communist Chartists: upon whom you and your venal press heap every kind of cowardly execration and ribald slander. You have found out many things since Peterloo; add that fact to the number.

It may seem strange that I did not tell my mother into what a pandemonium I had fallen, and get her to deliver me; but a delicacy, which was not all evil, kept me back; I shrank from seeming to dislike to earn my daily bread, and still more from seeming to object to what she had appointed for me. Her will had been always law; it seemed a deadly sin to dispute it. I took for granted, too, that she knew what the place was like, and that, therefore, it must be right for me. And when I came home at night, and got back to my beloved missionary stories, I gathered materials enough to occupy my thoughts during the next day's work, and make me blind and deaf to all the evil around me. My mother, poor dear creature, would have denounced my day-dreams sternly enough, had she known of their existence; but were they not holy

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angels from heaven ? guardians sent by that Father, whom I had been taught *not* to believe in, to shield my senses from pollution ?

I was ashamed, too, to mention to my mother the wickedness which I saw and heard. With the delicacy of an innocent boy, I almost imputed the very witnessing of it as a sin to myself ! and soon I began to be ashamed of more than the mere sitting by and hearing. I found myself gradually learning slang-insolence, laughing at coarse jokes, taking part in angry conversations ; my moral tone was gradually becoming lower ; but yet the habit of prayer remained, and every night at my bedside, when I prayed to ' be converted and made a child of God,' I prayed that the same mercy might be extended to my fellow-workmen ' if they belonged to the number of the elect.' Those prayers may have been answered in a wider and deeper sense than I then thought of.

But, altogether, I felt myself in a most distracted, rudderless state. My mother's advice I felt daily less and less inclined to ask. A gulf was opening between us ; we were moving in two different worlds, and she saw it, and imputed it to me as a sin ; and was the more cold to me by day, and prayed for me (as I knew afterwards) the more passionately while I slept. But help or teacher I had none. I knew not that I had a Father in Heaven. How could He be my Father till I was converted ? I was a child of the Devil, they told me ; and now and then I felt inclined to take them at their word, and behave like one. No sympathising face looked on me out of the wide heaven—off the wide earth, none. I was all boiling with new hopes, new temptations, new passions, new sorrows, and ' I looked to the right hand and to the left, and no man cared for my soul.'

I had felt myself from the first strangely drawn towards Crossthwaite, carefully as he seemed to avoid me, except to give me business directions in the workroom. He alone had shown me any kindness ; and he, too, alone was untainted with the sin around him. Silent, moody, and preoccupied, he was yet the king of the room. His

opinion was always asked, and listened to. His eye always cowed the ribald and the blasphemer ; his songs, when he rarely broke out into merriment, were always rapturously applauded. Men hated, and yet respected him. I shrank from him at first, when I heard him called a Chartist ; for my dim notions of that class were, that they were a very wicked set of people, who wanted to kill all the soldiers and policemen and respectable people, and rob all the shops of their contents. But Chartist or none, Crossthwaite fascinated me. I often found myself neglecting my work to study his face. I liked him, too, because he was as I was—small, pale, and weakly. He might have been five-and-twenty ; but his looks, like those of too many a working man, were rather those of a man of forty. Wild grey eyes gleamed out from under huge knitted brows, and a perpendicular wall of brain, too large for his puny body. He was not only, I soon discovered, a water-drinker, but a strict ‘vegetarian’ also ; to which, perhaps, he owed a great deal of the almost preternatural clearness, volubility, and sensitiveness of his mind. But whether from his ascetic habits, or the unhealthiness of his trade, the marks of ill-health were upon him ; and his sallow cheek, and ever-working lip, proclaimed too surely

The fiery soul which, working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy body to decay ;
And o’er informed the tenement of clay.

I longed to open my heart to him. Instinctively I felt that he was a kindred spirit. Often, turning round suddenly in the workroom, I caught him watching me with an expression which seemed to say, ‘Poor boy, and art thou too one of us? Hast thou too to fight with poverty and guidelessness, and the cravings of an unsatisfied intellect, as I have done?’ But when I tried to speak to him earnestly, his manner was peremptory and repellent. It was well for me that so it was—well for me, I see now, that it was not from him my mind received the first lessons in self-development. For guides did come to me in good time, though not such, perhaps, as

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either my mother or my readers would have chosen for me.

My great desire now was to get knowledge. By getting that I fancied, as most self-educated men are apt to do, I should surely get wisdom. Books, I thought, would tell me all I needed. But where to get the books? And which? I had exhausted our small stock at home; I was sick and tired, without knowing why, of their narrow conventional view of everything. After all, I had been reading them all along, not for their doctrines but for their facts, and knew not where to find more, except in forbidden paths. I dare not ask my mother for books, for I dare not confess to her that religious ones were just what I did not want; and all history, poetry, science, I had been accustomed to hear spoken of as 'carnal learning, human philosophy,' more or less diabolic and ruinous to the soul. So, as usually happens in this life—'By the law was the knowledge of sin'—and unnatural restrictions on the development of the human spirit only associated with guilt of conscience, what ought to have been an innocent and necessary blessing.

My poor mother, not singular in her mistake, had sent me forth, out of an unconscious paradise into the evil world, without allowing me even the sad strength which comes from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; she expected in me the innocence of the dove, as if that was possible on such an earth as this, without the wisdom of the serpent to support it. She forbade me strictly to stop and look into the windows of print shops, and I strictly obeyed her. But she forbade me, too, to read any book which I had not first shown her; and that restriction, reasonable enough in the abstract, practically meant, in the case of a poor boy like myself, reading no books at all. And then came my first act of disobedience, the parent of many more. Bitterly have I repented it, and bitterly been punished. Yet, strange contradiction! I dare not wish it undone. But such is the great law of life. Punished for our sins we surely are; and yet how often they become our blessings, teaching us that which nothing

Alton Locke

else can teach us ! Nothing else ? One says so. Rich parents, I suppose, say so, when they send their sons to public schools 'to learn life.' We working men have too often no other teacher than our own errors. But surely, surely, the rich ought to have been able to discover some mode of education in which knowledge may be acquired without the price of conscience. Yet they have not ; and we must not complain of them for not giving such a one to the working man when they have not yet even given it to their own children.

In a street through which I used to walk homeward was an old book shop, piled and fringed outside and in with books of every age, size, and colour. And here I at last summoned courage to stop, and timidly and stealthily taking out some volume whose title attracted me, snatch hastily a few pages and hasten on, half fearful of being called on to purchase, half ashamed of a desire which I fancied every one else considered as unlawful as my mother did. Sometimes I was lucky enough to find the same volume several days running, and to take up the subject where I had left it off ; and thus I contrived to hurry through a great deal of 'Childe Harold,' 'Lara,' and the 'Corsair'—a new world of wonders to me. They fed, those poems, both my health and my diseases ; while they gave me, little of them as I could understand, a thousand new notions about scenery and man, a sense of poetic melody and luxuriance as yet utterly unknown. They chimed in with all my discontent, my melancholy, my thirst after any life of action and excitement, however frivolous, insane, or even worse. I forgot the Corsair's sinful trade in his free and daring life ; rather, I honestly eliminated the bad element—in which, God knows, I took no delight—and kept the good one. However that might be, the innocent—guilty pleasure grew on me day by day. Innocent, because human—guilty, because disobedient. But have I not paid the penalty ?

One evening, however, I fell accidentally on a new book—*The Life and Poems of J. Bethune*. I opened the story of his life—became interested, absorbed—and there I stood,

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I know not how long, on the greasy pavement, heedless of the passers who thrust me right and left, reading by the flaring gaslight that sad history of labour, sorrow, and death.—How the Highland cotter, in spite of disease, penury, starvation itself, and the daily struggle to earn his bread by digging and ditching, educated himself—how he toiled unceasingly with his hands—how he wrote his poems in secret on dirty scraps of paper and old leaves of books—how thus he wore himself out, manful and godly, ‘bating not a jot of heart or hope,’ till the weak flesh would bear no more; and the noble spirit, unrecognised by the lord of the soil, returned to God who gave it. I seemed to see in his history a sad presage of my own. If he, stronger, more self-restrained, more righteous far than ever I could be, had died thus unknown, unassisted, in the stern battle with social disadvantages, what must be my lot?

And tears of sympathy, rather than of selfish fear, fell fast upon the book.

A harsh voice from the inner darkness of the shop startled me.

‘Hoot, laddie, ye’ll better no spoil my books wi’ greeting ower them.’

I replaced the book hastily, and was hurrying on, but the same voice called me back in a more kindly tone.

‘Stop a wee, my laddie. I’m no angered wi’ ye. Come in, and we’ll just ha’ a bit crack thegither.’

I went in, for there was a geniality in the tone to which I was unaccustomed, and something whispered to me the hope of an adventure, as indeed it proved to be, if an event deserves that name which decided the course of my whole destiny.

‘What war ye greeting about, then? What was the book?’

‘Bethune’s Life and Poems, sir,’ I said. And certainly they did affect me very much.

‘Affect ye? Ah, Johnnie Bethune, puir fellow! Ye maunna take on about sic like laddies, or ye’ll greet your e’en out o’ your head. It’s mony a braw man

Alton Locke

beside Johnnie Bethune has gane Johnnie Bethune's gate.'

Though unaccustomed to the Scotch accent, I could make out enough of this speech to be in nowise consoled by it. But the old man turned the conversation by asking me abruptly my name, and trade, and family.

'Hum, hum, widow, eh? puir body! work at Smith's shop, eh? Ye'll ken John Crossthwaite, then? ay? hum, hum; an' ye're desirous o' reading books? vara weel—let's see your cawpabilities.'

And he pulled me into the dim light of the little back window, shoved back his spectacles, and peering at me from underneath them, began, to my great astonishment, to feel my head all over.

'Hum, hum, a vara gude forehead—vara gude indeed. Causative organs large, perceptive ditto. Imagination superabundant—mun be heeded. Benevolence, conscientiousness, ditto, ditto. Caution—no that large—might be developed,' with a quiet chuckle, 'under a gude Scot's education. Just turn your head into profile, laddie. Hum, hum. Back o' the head a'thegither defective. Firmness sma'—love of approbation unco big. Beware o' leeing, as ye live; ye'll need it. Philoprogenitiveness gude. Ye'll be fond o' bairns, I'm guessing?'

'Of what?'

'Children, laddie,—children.'

'Very,' answered I, in utter dismay at what seemed to me a magical process for getting at all my secret failings.

'Hum, hum! Amative and combative organs sma'—a general want o' healthy animalism, as my freen' Mr. Deville wad say. And ye want to read books?'

I confessed my desire, without, alas! confessing that my mother had forbidden it.

'Vara weel; then books I'll lend ye, after I've had a crack wi' Crossthwaite aboot ye, gin I find his opinion o' ye satisfactory. Come to me the day after to-morrow. An' mind, here are my rules:—a' damage done to a book to be paid for, or na mair books lent; ye'll mind to take no books without leave; specially ye'll mind no to read

The Tailor's Workroom

in bed o' nights,—industrious folks ought to be sleeping betimes, an' I'd no be a party to burning puir weans in their beds ; and lastly, ye'll observe not to read mair than five books at once.'

I assured him that I thought such a thing impossible ; but he smiled in his saturnine way, and said—

'We'll see this day fortnight. Now, then, I've observed ye for a month past over that aristocratic Byron's poems. And I'm willing to teach the young idea how to shoot—but no to shoot itself ; so ye'll just leave alane that vinegary, soul-destroying trash, and I'll lend ye, gin I hear a gude report of ye, 'The Paradise Lost,' o' John Milton—a gran' classic model ; and for the doctrine o't, it's just about as gude as ye'll hear elsewhere the noo. So gang your gate, and tell John Crossthwaite, privately, auld Sandy Mackaye wad like to see him the morn's night.'

I went home in wonder and delight. Books ! books ! books ! I should have my fill of them at last. And when I said my prayers at night, I thanked God for this unexpected boon ; and then remembered that my mother had forbidden it. That thought checked the thanks, but not the pleasure. Oh, parents ! are there not real sins enough in the world already, without your defiling it, over and above, by inventing new ones ?

CHAPTER III

SANDY MACKAYE

THAT day fortnight came,—and the old Scotchman's words came true. Four books of his I had already, and I came in to borrow a fifth; whereon he began with a solemn chuckle—

‘Eh, laddie, laddie, I’ve been treating ye as the grocers do their new ’prentices. They first gie the boys three days’ free warren among the figs and the sugar-candy, and they get scunnered wi’ sweets after that. Noo, then, my lad, ye’ve just been reading four books in three days—and here’s a fifth. Ye’ll no open this again.’

‘Oh!’ I cried, piteously enough, ‘just let me finish what I am reading. I’m in the middle of such a wonderful account of the Hornitos of Jurullo.’

‘Hornets or wasps, a swarm o’ them ye’re like to have at this rate; and a very bad substitute ye’ll find them for the Attic bee. Now tak’ tent. I’m no in the habit of speaking without deliberation, for it saves a man a great deal of trouble in changing his mind. If ye canna traduce to me a page o’ Virgil by this day three months, ye read no more o’ my books. Desultory reading is the bane o’ lads. Ye maun begin with self-restraint and method, my man, gin ye intend to gie yoursel’ a liberal education. So I’ll just mak’ you a present of an auld Latin grammar, and ye maun begin where your betters ha’ begun before you.’

‘But who will teach me Latin?’

‘Hoot, man! who’ll teach a man anything except

Sandy Mackaye

himself? It's only gentlefolks and puir aristocrat bodies that go to be spoilt wi' tutors and pedagogues, cramming and loading them wi' knowledge, as ye'd load a gun, to shoot it all out again, just as it went down, in a college examination, and forget all about it after.'

'Ah!' I sighed, 'if I could have gone to college!'

'What for, then? My father was a Hieland farmer, and yet he was a weel-learned man! and "Sandy, my lad," he used to say, "a man kens just as much as he's taught himself, and na mair. So get wisdom; and wi' all your getting, get understanding." And so I did. And mony's the Greek exercise I've written in the cowbyres. And mony's the page o' Virgil, too, I've turned into good Dawric Scotch to ane that's dead and gane, poor hissie, sitting under the same plaid, with the sheep feeding round us, up among the hills, looking out ower the broad blue sea, and the wee haven wi' the fishing cobbles——'

There was a long solemn pause. I cannot tell why, but I loved the man from that moment; and I thought, too, that he began to love me. Those few words seemed a proof of confidence, perhaps all the deeper, because accidental and unconscious.

I took the Virgil which he lent me, with Hamilton's literal translation between the lines, and an old tattered Latin grammar; I felt myself quite a learned man—actually the possessor of a Latin book! I regarded as something almost miraculous the opening of this new field for my ambition. Not that I was consciously, much less selfishly, ambitious. I had no idea as yet to be anything but a tailor to the end; to make clothes—perhaps in a less infernal atmosphere—but still to make clothes and live thereby. I did not suspect that I possessed powers above the mass. My intense longing after knowledge had been to me like a girl's first love—a thing to be concealed from every eye—to be looked at askance even by myself, delicious as it was, with holy shame and trembling. And thus it was not cowardice merely, but natural modesty, which put me on a hundred plans of concealing my studies from my mother, and even from my sister.

Alton Locke

I slept in a little lean-to garret at the back of the house, some ten feet long by six wide. I could just stand upright against the inner wall, while the roof on the other side ran down to the floor. There was no fireplace in it, or any means of ventilation. No wonder I coughed all night accordingly, and woke about two every morning with choking throat and aching head. My mother often said that the room was 'too small for a Christian to sleep in, but where could she get a better?'

Such was my only study. I could not use it as such, however, at night without discovery; for my mother carefully looked in every evening, to see that my candle was out. But when my kind cough woke me, I rose, and creeping like a mouse about the room—for my mother and sister slept in the next chamber, and every sound was audible through the narrow partition—I drew my darling books out from under a board of the floor, one end of which I had gradually loosened at odd minutes, and with them a rushlight, earned by running on messages, or by taking bits of work home and finishing them for my fellows.

No wonder that with this scanty rest, and this complicated exertion of hands, eyes, and brain, followed by the long dreary day's work of the shop, my health began to fail; my eyes grew weaker and weaker; my cough became more acute; my appetite failed me daily. My mother noticed the change, and questioned me about it, affectionately enough. But I durst not, alas! tell the truth. It was not one offence, but the arrears of months of disobedience which I should have had to confess; and so arose infinite false excuses, and petty prevarications, which embittered and clogged still more my already over-tasked spirit. About my own ailments—formidable as I believed they were—I never had a moment's anxiety. The expectation of early death was as unnatural to me as it is, I suspect, to almost all. I die? Had I not hopes, plans, desires, infinite? Could I die while they were unfulfilled? Even now, I do not believe I shall die yet. I will not believe it—but let that pass.

Sandy Mackaye

Yes, let that pass. Perhaps I have lived long enough—longer than many a grey-headed man.

There is a race of mortals who become
Old in their youth, and die ere middle age.

And might not those days of mine then have counted as months?—those days when, before starting forth to walk two miles to the shop at six o'clock in the morning, I sat some three or four hours shivering on my bed, putting myself into cramped and painful postures, not daring even to cough, lest my mother should fancy me unwell, and come in to see me, poor dear soul!—my eyes aching over the page, my feet wrapped up in the bedclothes, to keep them from the miserable pain of the cold; longing, watching, dawn after dawn, for the kind summer mornings, when I should need no candlelight. Look at the picture awhile, ye comfortable folks, who take down from your shelves what books you like best at the moment, and then lie back, amid prints and statuettes, to grow wise in an easy-chair, with a blazing fire and a camphine lamp. The lower classes uneducated! Perhaps you would be so too, if learning cost you the privation which it costs some of them.

But this concealment could not last. My only wonder is, that I continued to get whole months of undiscovered study. One morning, about four o'clock, as might have been expected, my mother heard me stirring, came in, and found me sitting crosslegged on my bed, stitching away, indeed, with all my might, but with a Virgil open before me.

She glanced at the book, clutched it with one hand and my arm with the other, and sternly asked—

'Where did you get this heathen stuff?'

A lie rose to my lips; but I had been so gradually entangled in the loathed meshes of a system of concealment, and consequent prevarication, that I felt as if one direct falsehood would ruin for ever my fast-failing self-respect, and I told her the whole truth. She took the book and left the room. It was Saturday morning, and I

Alton Locke

spent two miserable days, for she never spoke a word to me till the two ministers had made their appearance, and drank their tea on Sunday evening : then at last she opened :

‘And now, Mr. Wigginton, what account have you of this Mr. Mackaye, who has seduced my unhappy boy from the paths of obedience?’

‘I am sorry to say, madam,’ answered the dark man, with a solemn snuffle, ‘that he proves to be a most objectionable and altogether unregenerate character. He is, as I am informed, neither more nor less than a Chartist, and an open blasphemer.’

‘He is not!’ I interrupted, angrily. ‘He has told me more about God, and given me better advice, than any human being, except my mother.’

‘Ah! madam, so thinks the unconverted heart, ignorant that the god of the Deist is not the God of the Bible—a consuming fire to all but His beloved elect; the god of the Deist, unhappy youth, is a mere self-invented, all-indulgent phantom—a will-o’-the-wisp, deluding the unwary, as he has deluded you, into the slough of carnal reason and shameful profligacy.’

‘Do you mean to call me a profligate?’ I retorted fiercely, for my blood was up, and I felt I was fighting for all which I prized in the world : ‘if you do, you lie. Ask my mother when I ever disobeyed her before? I have never touched a drop of anything stronger than water; I have slaved over-hours to pay for my own candle, I have!—I have no sins to accuse myself of, and neither you nor any person know of any. Do you call me a profligate because I wish to educate myself and rise in life?’

‘Ah!’ groaned my poor mother to herself, ‘still unconvinced of sin!’

‘The old Adam, my dear madam, you see,—standing as he always does, on his own filthy rags of works, while all the imaginations of his heart are only evil continually. Listen to me, poor sinner——’

‘I will not listen to you,’ I cried, the accumulated

Sandy Mackaye

disgust of years bursting out once and for all, 'for I hate and despise you, eating my poor mother here out of house and home. You are one of those who creep into widows' houses, and for pretence make long prayers. You, sir, I will hear,' I went on, turning to the dear old man, who had sat by shaking his white locks with a sad and puzzled air, 'for I love you.'

'My dear sister Locke,' he began, 'I really think sometimes—that is, ahem—with your leave, brother—I am almost disposed—but I should wish to defer to your superior zeal—yet, at the same time, perhaps, the desire for information, however carnal in itself, may be an instrument in the Lord's hands—you know what I mean. I always thought him a gracious youth, madam, didn't you? And perhaps—I only observe it in passing—the Lord's people among the dissenting connections are apt to undervalue human learning as a means—of course, I mean, only as a means. It is not generally known, I believe, that our reverend Puritan patriarchs, Howe and Baxter, Owen and many more, were not altogether unacquainted with heathen authors; nay, that they may have been called absolutely learned men. And some of our leading ministers are inclined—no doubt they will be led rightly in so important a matter—to follow the example of the Independents in educating their young ministers, and turning Satan's weapons of heathen mythology against himself, as St. Paul is said to have done. My dear boy, what books have you now got by you of Mr. Mackaye's?'

'Milton's Poems and a Latin Virgil.'

'Ah!' groaned the dark man; 'will poetry, will Latin save an immortal soul?'

'I'll tell you what, sir; you say yourself that it depends on God's absolute counsel whether I am saved or not. So, if I am elect, I shall be saved whatever I do; and if I am not, I shall be damned whatever I do; and in the meantime you had better mind your own business, and let me do the best I can for this life, as the next is all settled for me.'

This flippant, but after all not unreasonable speech

Alton Locke

seemed to silence the man ; and I took the opportunity of running upstairs and bringing down my Milton. The old man was speaking as I re-entered.

‘And you know, my dear madam, Mr. Milton was a true converted man, and a Puritan.’

‘He was Oliver Cromwell’s secretary,’ I added.

‘Did he teach you to disobey your mother?’ asked my mother.

I did not answer ; and the old man, after turning over a few leaves, as if he knew the book well, looked up.

‘I think, madam, you might let the youth keep these books, if he will promise, as I am sure he will, to see no more of Mr. Mackaye.’

I was ready to burst out crying, but I made up my mind and answered—

‘I must see him once again, or he will think me so ungrateful. He is the best friend that I ever had, except you, mother. Besides, I do not know if he will lend me any, after this.’

My mother looked at the old minister, and then gave a sullen assent.

‘Promise me only to see him once—but I cannot trust you. You have deceived me once, Alton, and you may again!’

‘I shall not, I shall not,’ I answered proudly. ‘You do not know me’—and I spoke true.

‘You do not know yourself, my poor dear foolish child!’ she replied—and that was true too.

‘And now, dear friends,’ said the dark man, ‘let us join in offering up a few words of special intercession.’

We all knelt down, and I soon discovered that by the special intercession was meant a string of bitter and groundless slanders against poor me, twisted into the form of a prayer for my conversion, ‘if it were God’s will.’ To which I responded with a closing ‘Amen,’ for which I was sorry afterwards, when I recollected that it was said in merely insolent mockery. But the little faith I had

Sandy Mackaye

was breaking up fast—not altogether, surely, by my own fault.¹

At all events, from that day I was emancipated from modern Puritanism. The ministers both avoided all serious conversation with me; and my mother did the same; while, with a strength of mind, rare among women, she never alluded to the scene of that Sunday evening. It was a rule with her never to recur to what was once done and settled. What was to be, might be prayed over. But it was to be endured in silence; yet wider and wider ever from that time opened the gulf between us.

I went trembling the next afternoon to Mackaye and told my story. He first scolded me severely for disobeying my mother. ‘He that begins o’ that gate, laddie, ends by disobeying God and his ain conscience. Gin ye’re to be a scholar, God will make you one—and if not, ye’ll no mak’ yoursel’ ane in spite o’ Him and His commandments.’ And then he filled his pipe and chuckled away in silence; at last he exploded in a horse-laugh.

‘So ye gied the ministers a bit o’ yer mind?’ ‘The deil’s amang the tailors’ in gude earnest, as the sang says. There’s Johnnie Crossthwaite kicked the Papist priest out o’ his house yestreen. Puir ministers, it’s ill times wi’ them! They gang about keckling and screighing after the working men, like a hen that’s hatched ducklings, when she sees them tak’ the water. Little Dunkeld’s coming to London sune, I’m thinking.

‘Hech! sic a parish, a parish, a parish;
Hech! sic a parish as Little Dunkeld!
They hae stickit the minister, hanged the precentor,
Dung down the steeple, and drucken the bell.’

¹ The portraits of the minister and the missionary are surely exceptions to their class, rather than the average. The Baptists have had their Andrew Fuller and Robert Hall, and among missionaries Dr. Carey and noble spirits in plenty. But such men as those who excited Alton Locke’s disgust are to be met with in every sect—in the Church of England, and in the Church of Rome. And it is a real and fearful scandal to the young, to see such men listened to as God’s messengers, in spite of their utter want of any manhood or virtue, simply because they are ‘orthodox,’ each according to the shibboleths of his hearers, and possess that vulpine ‘discretion of dulness,’ whose miraculous might Dean Swift sets forth in his *Essay on the Fates of Clergymen*. Such men do exist, and prosper; and as long as they are allowed to do so, Alton Lockes will meet them, and be scandalised by them.—Ed.

Alton Locke

‘But may I keep the books a little while, Mr. Mackaye?’

‘Keep them till ye die, gin ye will. What is the worth o’ them to me? What is the worth o’ anything to me, puir auld deevil, that ha’ no half a dizen years to live at the furthest. God bless ye, my bairn ; gang hame, and mind your mither, or it’s little gude books ’ll do ye.’

CHAPTER IV

TAILORS AND SOLDIERS

I WAS now thrown again utterly on my own resources. I read and re-read Milton's *Poems* and Virgil's *Æneid* for six more months at every spare moment ; thus spending over them, I suppose, all in all, far more time than most gentlemen have done. I found, too, in the last volume of Milton, a few of his select prose works : the *Areopagitica*, the *Defence of the English People*, and one or two more, in which I gradually began to take an interest ; and, little of them as I could comprehend, I was awed by their tremendous depth and power, as well as excited by the utterly new trains of thought into which they led me. Terrible was the amount of bodily fatigue which I had to undergo in reading at every spare moment, while walking to and fro from my work, while sitting up, often from midnight till dawn, stitching away to pay for the tallow-candle which I burnt, till I had to resort to all sorts of uncomfortable contrivances for keeping myself awake, even at the expense of bodily pain—Heaven forbid that I should weary my readers by describing them ! Young men of the upper classes, to whom study—pursue it as intensely as you will—is but the business of the day, and every spare moment relaxation ; little you guess the frightful drudgery undergone by a man of the people who has vowed to educate himself,—to live at once two lives, each as severe as the whole of yours,—to bring to the self-imposed toil of intellectual improvement, a body and brain already worn out by a day of toilsome manual

Alton Locke

labour. I did it. God forbid, though, that I should take credit to myself for it. Hundreds more have done it, with still fewer advantages than mine. Hundreds more, an ever-increasing army of martyrs, are doing it at this moment : of some of them, too, perhaps you may hear hereafter.

I had read through Milton, as I said, again and again ; I had got out of him all that my youth and my unregulated mind enabled me to get. I had devoured, too, not without profit, a large old edition of Foxe's *Martyrs*, which the venerable minister lent me, and now I was hungering again for fresh food, and again at a loss where to find it.

I was hungering, too, for more than information—for a friend. Since my intercourse with Sandy Mackaye had been stopped, six months had passed without my once opening my lips to any human being upon the subjects with which my mind was haunted day and night. I wanted to know more about poetry, history, politics, philosophy—all things in heaven and earth. But, above all, I wanted a faithful and sympathising ear into which to pour all my doubts, discontents, and aspirations. My sister Susan, who was one year younger than myself, was growing into a slender, pretty, hectic girl of sixteen. But she was altogether a devout Puritan. She had just gone through the process of conviction of sin and conversion ; and being looked upon at the chapel as an especially gracious professor, was either unable or unwilling to think or speak on any subject, except on those to which I felt a growing distaste. She had shrunk from me, too, very much, since my ferocious attack that Sunday evening on the dark minister, who was her special favourite. I remarked it, and it was a fresh cause of unhappiness and perplexity.

At last I made up my mind, come what would, to force myself upon Crossthwaite. He was the only man whom I knew who seemed able to help me ; and his very reserve had invested him with a mystery, which served to heighten my imagination of his powers. I waylaid him

Tailors and Soldiers

one day coming out of the workroom to go home, and plunged at once desperately into the matter.

‘Mr. Crossthwaite, I want to speak to you. I want to ask you to advise me.’

‘I have known that a long time.’

‘Then why did you never say a kind word to me?’

‘Because I was waiting to see whether you were worth saying a kind word to. It was but the other day, remember, you were a bit of a boy. Now, I think, I may trust you with a thing or two. Besides, I wanted to see whether you trusted me enough to ask me. Now you’ve broke the ice at last, in with you, head and ears, and see what you can fish out.’

‘I am very unhappy——’

‘That’s no new disorder that I know of.’

‘No ; but I think the reason I am unhappy is a strange one ; at least, I never read of but one person else in the same way. I want to educate myself, and I can’t.’

‘You must have read precious little then, if you think yourself in a strange way. Bless the boy’s heart ! And what the dickens do you want to be educating yourself for, pray ?’

This was said in a tone of good-humoured banter, which gave me courage. He offered to walk homewards with me ; and, as I shambled along by his side, I told him all my story, and all my griefs.

I never shall forget that walk. Every house, tree, turning, which we passed that day on our way, is indissolubly connected in my mind with some strange new thought which arose in me just at each spot ; and recurs, so are the mind and the senses connected, as surely as I repress it.

I had been telling him about Sandy Mackaye. He confessed to an acquaintance with him ; but in a reserved and mysterious way, which only heightened my curiosity.

We were going through the Horse Guards, and I could not help lingering to look with wistful admiration on the huge mustachioed war-machines who sauntered about the courtyard.

Alton Locke

A tall and handsome officer, blazing in scarlet and gold, cantered in on a superb horse, and, dismounting, threw the reins to a dragoon as grand and gaudy as himself. Did I envy him? Well—I was but seventeen. And there is something noble to the mind, as well as to the eye, in the great strong man, who can fight—a completeness, a self-restraint, a terrible sleeping power in him. As Mr. Carlyle says, ‘A soldier, after all, is one of the few remaining realities of the age. All other professions almost promise one thing, and perform—alas! what? But this man promises to fight, and does it; and, if he be told, will veritably take out a long sword and kill me.’

So thought my companion, though the mood in which he viewed the fact was somewhat different from my own.

‘Come on,’ he said, peevishly, clutching me by the arm; ‘what do you want dawdling? Are you a nursery-maid, that you must stare at those red-coated butchers?’ And a deep curse followed.

‘What harm have they done you?’

‘I should think I owed them turn enough.’

‘What?’

‘They cut my father down at Sheffield,—perhaps with the very swords he helped to make,—because he would not sit still and starve, and see us starving around him, while those who fattened on the sweat of his brow, and on those lungs of his, which the sword-grinding dust was eating out day by day, were wantoning on venison and champagne. That’s the harm they’ve done me, my chap!’

‘Poor fellows!—they only did as they were ordered, I suppose.’

‘And what business have they to let themselves be ordered? What right, I say—what right has any free, reasonable soul on earth, to sell himself for a shilling a day to murder any man, right or wrong—even his own brother or his own father—just because such a whiskered, profligate jackanapes as that officer, without learning, without any god except his own looking-glass and his opera-dancer—a fellow who, just because he is a born gentleman, is set to command grey-headed men before he

Tailors and Soldiers

can command his own meanest passions. Good heavens! that the lives of free men should be entrusted to such a stuffed cockatoo; and that free men should be such traitors to their country, traitors to their own flesh and blood, as to sell themselves, for a shilling a day and the smirks of the nursery-maids, to do that fellow's bidding!

'What are you a-grumbling about here, my man?—gotten the cholera?' asked one of the dragoons, a huge, stupid-looking lad.

'About you, you young long-legged cut-throat,' answered Crossthaite, 'and all your crew of traitors.'

'Help, help, comrades o' mine!' quoth the dragoon, bursting with laughter; 'I'm gaun be moorthered wi' a little booy that's gane mad, and toorned Chartist.'

I dragged Crossthaite off; for what was jest to the soldiers, I saw, by his face, was fierce enough earnest to him. We walked on a little, in silence.

'Now,' I said, 'that was a good-natured fellow enough, though he was a soldier. You and he might have cracked many a joke together, if you did but understand each other;—and he was a countryman of yours, too.'

'I may crack something else besides jokes with him some day,' answered he, moodily.

'Pon my word, you must take care how you do it. He is as big as four of us.'

'That vile aristocrat, the old Italian poet—what's his name?—Ariosto—ay!—he knew which quarter the wind was making for, when he said that firearms would be the end of all your old knights and gentlemen in armour, that hewed down unarmed innocents as if they had been sheep. Gunpowder is your true leveller—dash physical strength! A boy's a man with a musket in his hand, my chap!'

'God forbid,' I said, 'that I should ever be made a man of in that way, or you either. I do not think we are quite big enough to make fighters; and if we were, what have we got to fight about?'

'Big enough to make fighters?' said he, half to himself; 'or strong enough, perhaps?—or clever enough?—and yet Alexander was a little man, and the Petit Caporal,

Alton Locke

and Nelson, and Cæsar, too ; and so was Saul of Tarsus, and weakly he was into the bargain. Æsop was a dwarf, and so was Attila ; Shakespeare was lame ; Alfred, a rickety weakling ; Byron, clubfooted ;—so much for body *versus* spirit—brute force *versus* genius—genius.’

I looked at him ; his eyes glared like two balls of fire. Suddenly he turned to me.

‘Locke, my boy, I’ve made an ass of myself, and got into a rage, and broken a good old resolution of mine, and a promise that I made to my dear little woman—bless her ! and said things to you that you ought to know nothing of for this long time ; but those red-coats always put me beside myself. God forgive me !’ And he held out his hand to me cordially.

‘I can quite understand your feeling deeply on one point,’ I said, as I took it, ‘after the sad story you told me ; but why so bitter on all ? What is there so very wrong about things, that we must begin fighting about it ?’

‘Bless your heart, poor innocent ! What is wrong ?—what is not wrong ? Wasn’t there enough in that talk with Mackaye, that you told me of just now, to show anybody that, who can tell a hawk from a hand-saw ?’

‘Was it wrong in him to give himself such trouble about the education of a poor young fellow, who has no tie on him, who can never repay him ?’

‘No ; that’s just like him. He feels for the people, for he has been one of us. He worked in a printing-office himself many a year, and he knows the heart of the working man. But he didn’t tell you the whole truth about education. He daren’t tell you. No one who has money dare speak out his heart ; not that he has much certainly ; but the cunning old Scot that he is, he lives by the present system of things, and he won’t speak ill of the bridge which carries him over—till the time comes.’

I could not understand whither all this tended, and walked on silent and somewhat angry, at hearing the least slight cast on Mackaye.

Tailors and Soldiers

‘Don’t you see, stupid?’ he broke out at last. ‘What did he say to you about gentlemen being crammed by tutors and professors? Have not you as good a right to them as any gentleman?’

‘But he told me they were no use—that every man must educate himself.’

‘Oh! all very fine to tell you the grapes are sour, when you can’t reach them. Bah, lad! Can’t you see what comes of education?—that any dolt, provided he be a gentleman, can be doctored up at school and college, enough to make him play his part decently—his mighty part of ruling us, and riding over our heads, and picking our pockets, as parson, doctor, lawyer, member of Parliament—while we—you now, for instance—cleverer than ninety-nine gentlemen out of a hundred, if you had one-tenth the trouble taken with you that is taken with every pig-headed son of an aristocrat——’

‘Am I clever?’ asked I, in honest surprise.

‘What! haven’t you found that out yet? Don’t try to put that on me. Don’t a girl know when she’s pretty, without asking her neighbours?’

‘Really, I never thought about it.’

‘More simpleton you. Old Mackaye has, at all events; though, canny Scotchman that he is, he’ll never say a word to you about it, yet he makes no secret of it to other people. I heard him the other day telling some of our friends that you were a thorough young genius.’

I blushed scarlet, between pleasure and a new feeling; was it ambition?

‘Why, haven’t you a right to aspire to a college education as any do-nothing canon there at the abbey, lad?’

‘I don’t know that I have a right to anything.’

‘What, not become what Nature intended you to become? What has she given you brains for, but to be educated and used? Oh! I heard a fine lecture upon that at our club the other night. There was a man there—a gentleman, too, but a thoroughgoing people’s man, I can tell you, Mr. O’Flynn. What an orator that man is to be sure! The Irish Æschines, I hear they call him

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in Conciliation Hall. Isn't he the man to pitch into the Mammonites? "Gentlemen and ladies," says he, "how long will a diabolic society"—no, an effete society, it was—"how long will an effete, emasculate, and effeminate society, in the diabolic selfishness of its eclecticism, refuse to acknowledge what my immortal countryman, Burke, calls the *Dei voluntatem in rebus revelatam*—the revelation of Nature's will in the phenomena of matter? The cerebration of each is the prophetic sacrament of the yet undeveloped possibilities of his mentation. The form of the brain alone, and not the possession of the vile gauds of wealth and rank, constitute man's only right to education—to the glories of art and science. Those beaming eyes and roseate lips beneath me proclaim a bevy of undeveloped Aspasias, of embryo Cleopatras, destined by Nature, and only restrained by man's injustice, from ruling the world by their beauty's eloquence. Those massive and beetling brows, gleaming with the lambent flames of patriotic ardour—what is needed to unfold them into a race of Shakespeares and of Gracchi, ready to proclaim with sword and lyre the divine harmonies of liberty, equality, and fraternity, before a quailing universe?"

'It sounds very grand,' replied I, meekly; 'and I should like very much certainly to have a good education. But I can't see whose injustice keeps me out of one if I can't afford to pay for it.'

'Whose? Why, the parsons' to be sure. They've got the monopoly of education in England, and they get their bread by it at their public schools and universities; and of course it's their interest to keep up the price of their commodity, and let no man have a taste of it who can't pay down handsomely. And so those aristocrats of college dons go on rolling in riches, and fellowships, and scholarships, that were bequeathed by the people's friends in old times, just to educate poor scholars like you and me, and give us our rights as free men.'

'But I thought the clergy were doing so much to educate the poor. At least, I hear all the dissenting ministers grumbling at their continual interference.'

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‘Ay, educating them to make them slaves and bigots. They don’t teach them what they teach their own sons. Look at the miserable smattering of general information—just enough to serve as sauce for their great first and last lesson of “Obey the powers that be”—whatever they be, leave us alone in our comforts, and starve patiently ; do, like good boys, for it’s God’s will. And then, if a boy does show talent in school, do they help him up in life? Not they ; when he has just learnt enough to whet his appetite for more, they turn him adrift again, to sink and drudge—to do his duty, as they call it, in that state of life to which society and the devil have called him.’

‘But there are innumerable stories of great Englishmen who have risen from the lowest ranks.’

‘Ay ; but where are the stories of those who have not risen—of all the noble geniuses who have ended in desperation, drunkenness, starvation, suicide, because no one would take the trouble of lifting them up, and enabling them to walk in the path which Nature had marked out for them? Dead men tell no tales ; and this old whited sepulchre, society, ain’t going to turn informer against itself.’

‘I trust and hope,’ I said, sadly, ‘that if God intends me to rise, He will open the way for me ; perhaps the very struggles and sorrows of a poor genius may teach him more than ever wealth and prosperity could.’

‘True, Alton, my boy ! and that’s my only comfort. It does make men of us, this bitter battle of life. We working men, when we do come out of the furnace, come out, not tinsel and papier maché, like those fops of red-tape statesmen, but steel and granite, Alton, my boy—that has been seven times tried in the fire : and woe to the papier maché gentleman that runs against us ! But,’ he went on, sadly, ‘for one who comes safe through the furnace, there are a hundred who crack in the burning. You are a young bear, my lad, with all your sorrows before you ; and you’ll find that a working man’s training is like the Red Indian children’s. The few who are strong enough

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to stand it grow up warriors ; but all those who are not fire-and-water-proof by nature—just die, Alton, my lad, and the tribe thinks itself well rid of them.’

So that conversation ended. But it had implanted in my bosom a new seed of mingled good and evil, which was destined to bear fruit, precious perhaps as well as bitter. God knows, it has hung on the tree long enough. Sour and harsh from the first, it has been many a year in ripening. But the sweetness of the apple, the potency of the grape, as the chemists tell us, are born out of acidity—a developed sourness. Will it be so with my thoughts? Dare I assert, as I sit writing here, with the wild waters slipping past the cabin windows, backwards and backwards ever, every plunge of the vessel one forward leap from the old world—worn-out world I had almost called it, of sham civilisation and real penury—dare I hope ever to return and triumph? Shall I, after all, lay my bones among my own people, and hear the voices of freemen whisper in my dying ears?

Silence, dreaming heart! Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof—and the good thereof also. Would that I had known that before! Above all, that I had known it on that night, when first the burning thought arose in my heart, that I was unjustly used; that society had not given me my rights. It came to me as a revelation, celestial-infernal, full of glorious hopes of the possible future in store for me through the perfect development of all my faculties; and full, too, of fierce present rage, wounded vanity, bitter grudgings against those more favoured than myself, which grew in time almost to cursing against the God who had made me a poor untutored working man, and seemed to have given me genius only to keep me in a ‘Tantalus’ hell of unsatisfied thirst.

Ay, respectable gentlemen and ladies, I will confess all to you—you shall have, if you enjoy it, a fresh opportunity for indulging that supreme pleasure which the press daily affords you of insulting the classes whose powers most of you know as little as you do their sufferings. Yes; the Chartist poet is vain, conceited, ambitious,

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uneducated, shallow, inexperienced, envious, ferocious, scurrilous, seditious, traitorous. — Is your charitable vocabulary exhausted? Then ask yourselves, how often have you yourselves honestly resisted and conquered the temptation to any one of these sins, when it has come across you just once in a way, and not as they came to me, as they come to thousands of the working men, daily and hourly, ‘till their torments do, by length of time, become their elements’? What, are we covetous too? Yes! And if those who have, like you, still covet more, what wonder if those who have nothing covet something? Profligate too? Well, though that imputation as a generality is utterly calumnious, though your amount of respectable animal enjoyment per annum is a hundred times as great as that of the most self-indulgent artisan, yet, if you had ever felt what it is to want, not only every luxury of the senses, but even bread to eat, you would think more mercifully of the man who makes up by rare excesses, and those only of the limited kinds possible to him, for long intervals of dull privation, and says in his madness, ‘Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!’ We have our sins, and you have yours. Ours may be the more gross and barbaric, but yours are none the less damnable; perhaps all the more so, for being the sleek, subtle, respectable, religious sins they are. You are frantic enough, if our part of the press calls you hard names, but you cannot see that your part of the press repays it back to us with interest. *We* see those insults, and feel them bitterly enough; and do not forget them, alas! soon enough, while they pass unheeded by your delicate eyes as trivial truisms. Horrible, unprincipled, villainous, seditious, frantic, blasphemous, are epithets, of course, when applied to—to how large a portion of the English people, you will some day discover to your astonishment. When will that come, and how? In thunder, and storm, and garments rolled in blood? Or like the dew on the mown grass, and the clear shining of the sunlight after April rain?

Yes, it was true. Society had not given me my

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rights. And woe unto the man on whom that idea, true or false, rises lurid, filling all his thoughts with stifling glare, as of the pit itself. Be it true, be it false, it is equally a woe to believe it ; to have to live on a negation ; to have to worship for our only idea, as hundreds of thousands of us have this day, the hatred of the things which are. Ay, though one of us here and there may die in faith, in sight of the promised land, yet is it not hard, when looking from the top of Pisgah into ' the good time coming ' to watch the years slipping away one by one, and death crawling nearer and nearer, and the people wearying themselves in the fire for very vanity, and Jordan not yet passed, the promised land not yet entered ? While our little children die around us, like lambs beneath the knife, of cholera and typhus and consumption, and all the diseases which the good time can and will prevent ; which, as science has proved, and you the rich confess, might be prevented at once, if you dared to bring in one bold and comprehensive measure, and not sacrifice yearly the lives of thousands to the idol of vested interests, and a majority in the House. Is it not hard to men who smart beneath such things to help crying aloud—' Thou cursed Moloch-Mammon, take my life if thou wilt ; let me die in the wilderness, for I have deserved it ; but these little ones in mines and factories, in typhus-cellars, and Tooting pandemoniums, what have they done ? If not in their fathers' cause, yet still in theirs, were it so great a sin to die upon a barricade ? '

Or after all, my working brothers, is it true of our promised land, even as of that Jewish one of old, that the *priests'* feet must first cross the mystic stream into the good land and large which God has prepared for us ?

Is it so indeed ? Then in the name of the Lord of Hosts, ye priests of His, why will ye not awake, and arise, and go over Jordan, that the people of the Lord may follow you ?

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CHAPTER V

THE SCEPTIC'S MOTHER

MY readers will perceive from what I have detailed, that I was not likely to get any positive ground of comfort from Crossthwaite; and from within myself there was daily less and less hope of any. Daily the struggle became more intolerable between my duty to my mother and my duty to myself—that inward thirst for mental self-improvement, which, without any clear consciousness of its sanctity or inspiration, I felt, and could not help feeling, that I *must* follow. No doubt it was very self-willed and ambitious of me to do that which rich men's sons are flogged for not doing, and rewarded with all manner of prizes, scholarships, fellowships for doing. But the nineteenth year is a time of life at which self-will is apt to exhibit itself in other people besides tailors; and those religious persons who think it no sin to drive their sons on through classics and mathematics, in hopes of gaining them a station in life, ought not to be very hard upon me for driving myself on through the same path without any such selfish hope of gain—though perhaps the very fact of my having no wish or expectation of such advantage will constitute in their eyes my sin and folly, and prove that I was following the dictates merely of a carnal lust, and not of a proper worldly prudence. I really do not wish to be flippant or sneering. I have seen the evil of it as much as any man, in myself and in my own class. But there are excuses for such a fault in the working man. It does sour and madden him to be called presumptuous and

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ambitious for the very same aspirations which are lauded up to the skies in the sons of the rich—unless, indeed, he will do one little thing, and so make his peace with society. If he will desert his own class; if he will try to become a sham gentleman, a parasite, and, if he can, a Mammonite, the world will compliment him on his noble desire to '*rise in life*.' He will have won his spurs, and be admitted into that exclusive pale of knighthood, beyond which it is a sin to carry arms even in self-defence. But if the working genius dares to be true to his own class—to stay among them—to regenerate them—to defend them—to devote his talents to those among whom God placed him and brought him up—then he is the demagogue, the incendiary, the fanatic, the dreamer. So you would have the monopoly of talent, too, exclusive worldlings? And yet you pretend to believe in the miracle of Pentecost, and the religion that was taught by the carpenter's Son, and preached across the world by fishermen!

I was several times minded to argue the question out with my mother, and assert for myself the same independence of soul which I was now earning for my body by my wages. Once I had resolved to speak to her that very evening; but, strangely enough, happening to open the Bible, which, alas! I did seldom at that time, my eye fell upon the chapter where Jesus, after having justified to His parents His absence in the Temple, while hearing the doctors and asking them questions, yet went down with them to Nazareth after all, and was subject unto them. The story struck me vividly as a symbol of my own duties. But on reading further, I found more than one passage which seemed to me to convey a directly opposite lesson, where His mother and His brethren, fancying Him mad, attempted to interfere with His labours, and asserting their family rights as reasons for retaining Him, met with a peremptory rebuff. I puzzled my head for some time to find out which of the two cases was the more applicable to my state of self-development. The notion of asking for teaching from on high on such a point had never crossed me. Indeed, if it had, I did not

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believe sufficiently either in the story or in the doctrines connected with it, to have tried such a resource. And so, as may be supposed, my growing self-conceit decided for me that the latter course was the fitting one.

And yet I had not energy to carry it out. I was getting so worn out in body and mind from continual study and labour, stinted food and want of sleep, that I could not face the thought of an explosion, such as I knew must ensue, and I lingered on in the same unhappy state, becoming more and more morose in manner to my mother, while I was as assiduous as ever in all filial duties. But I had no pleasure in home. She seldom spoke to me. Indeed, there was no common topic about which we could speak. Besides, ever since that fatal Sunday evening, I saw that she suspected me and watched me. I had good reason to believe that she set spies upon my conduct. Poor dear mother ! God forbid that I should accuse thee for a single care of thine, for a single suspicion even, prompted as they all were by a mother's anxious love. I would never have committed these things to paper, hadst thou not been far beyond the reach or hearing of them ; and only now, in hopes that they may serve as a warning, in some degree to mothers, but ten times more to children. For I sinned against thee, deeply and shamefully, in thought and deed, while thou didst never sin against me ; though all thy caution did but hasten the fatal explosion which came and perhaps must have come, under some form or other, in any case.

I had been detained one night in the shop till late ; and on my return my mother demanded, in a severe tone, the reason of my stay ; and on my telling her, answered as severely that she did not believe me ; that she had too much reason to suspect that I had been with bad companions.

'Who dared to put such a thought into your head ?'

She 'would not give up her authorities, but she had too much reason to believe them.'

Again I demanded the name of my slanderer, and was refused it. And then I burst out, for the first time in my life, into a real fit of rage with her. I cannot tell how I

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dared to say what I did, but I was weak, nervous, irritable—my brain excited beyond all natural tension. Above all, I felt that she was unjust to me; and my good conscience, as well as my pride, rebelled.

‘You have never trusted me,’ I cried, ‘you have watched me——’

‘Did you not deceive me once already?’

‘And if I did,’ I answered, more and more excited, ‘have I not slaved for you, stinted myself of clothes to pay your rent? Have I not run to and fro for you like a slave, while I knew all the time you did not respect me or trust me! If you had only treated me as a child and an idiot, I could have borne it. But you have been thinking of me all the while as an incarnate fiend—dead in trespasses and sins—a child of wrath and the devil. What right have you to be astonished if I should do my father’s works?’

‘You may be ignorant of vital religion,’ she answered; ‘and you may insult me. But if you make a mock of God’s Word, you leave my house. If you can laugh at religion, you can deceive me.’

The pent-up scepticism of years burst forth.

‘Mother,’ I said, ‘don’t talk to me about religion, and election, and conversion, and all that—I don’t believe one word of it. Nobody does, except good kind people—(like you, alas! I was going to say, but the devil stopped the words at my lips)—who must needs have some reason to account for their goodness. That Bowyer—he’s a soft heart by nature, and as he is, so he does—religion has had nothing to do with that, any more than it has with that black-faced, canting scoundrel who has been telling you lies about me. Much his heart is changed. He carries sneak and slanderer written in his face—and sneak and slanderer he will be, elect or none. Religion? Nobody believes in it. The rich don’t; or they wouldn’t fill their churches up with pews, and shut the poor out, all the time they are calling them brothers. They believe the gospel? Then why do they leave the men who make their clothes to starve in such hells on earth as our workroom? No

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more do the tradespeople believe in it ; or they wouldn't go home from sermon to sand the sugar, and put sloe-leaves in the tea, and send out lying puffs of their vamped-up goods, and grind the last farthing out of the poor creatures who rent their wretched stinking houses. And as for the workmen—they laugh at it all, I can tell you. Much good religion is doing for them ! You may see it's fit only for women and children—for go where you will, church or chapel, you see hardly anything but bonnets and babies ! I don't believe a word of it,—once and for all. I'm old enough to think for myself, and a free-thinker I will be, and believe nothing but what I know and understand.'

I had hardly spoken the words, when I would have given worlds to recall them—but it was to be—and it was.

Sternly she looked at me full in the face, till my eyes dropped before her gaze. Then she spoke steadily and slowly—

'Leave this house this moment. You are no son of mine henceforward. Do you think I will have my daughter polluted by the company of an infidel and a blasphemer ?'

'I will go,' I answered fiercely ; 'I can get my own living at all events !' And before I had time to think, I had rushed upstairs, packed up my bundle, not forgetting the precious books, and was on my way through the frosty, echoing streets, under the cold glare of the winter's moon.

I had gone perhaps half a mile, when the thought of home rushed over me—the little room where I had spent my life—the scene of all my childish joys and sorrows—which I should never see again, for I felt that my departure was for ever. Then I longed to see my mother once again—not to speak to her—for I was at once too proud and too cowardly to do that—but to have a look at her through the window. One look—for all the while, though I was boiling over with rage and indignation, I felt that it was all on the surface—that in the depths of our hearts I loved her and she loved me. And yet I wished to be

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angry, wished to hate her. Strange contradiction of the flesh and spirit !

Hastily and silently I retraced my steps to the house. The gate was padlocked. I cautiously stole over the palings to the window—the shutter was closed and fast. I longed to knock—I lifted my hand to the door, and dare not : indeed, I knew that it was useless, in my dread of my mother's habit of stern determination. That room—that mother I never saw again. I turned away ; sickened at heart, I was clambering back again, looking behind me towards the window, when I felt a strong grip on my collar, and turning round, had a policeman's lantern flashed in my face.

‘Hullo, young ’un, and what do you want here?’ with a strong emphasis, after the fashion of policemen, on all his pronouns.

‘Hush ! or you’ll alarm my mother !’

‘Oh ! eh ! Forgot the latch-key, you sucking Don Juan, that’s it, is it ? Late home from the Victory ?’

I told him simply how the case stood, and entreated him to get me a night’s lodging, assuring him that my mother would not admit me, or I ask to be admitted.

The policeman seemed puzzled, but after scratching his hat in lieu of his head for some seconds, replied—

‘This here is the dodge—you goes outside and lies down on the kerb-stone ; whereby I spies you a-sleeping in the streets, contrary to Act o’ Parliament, whereby it is my duty to take you to the station-house ; whereby you gets a night’s lodging free gracious for nothing, and company perwided by Her Majesty.’

‘Oh, not to the station-house !’ I cried in shame and terror.

‘Werry well ; then you must keep moving all night continually, whereby you avoids the hact ; or else you goes to a twopenny-rope shop and gets a lie down. And your bundle you’d best leave at my house. Twopenny-rope society a’n’t particular. I’m going off my beat ; you walk home with me and leave your traps. Everybody knows me—Costello, V 21, that’s my number.’

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So on I went with the kind-hearted man, who preached solemnly to me all the way on the fifth commandment. But I heard very little of it ; for before I had proceeded a quarter of a mile, a deadly faintness and dizziness came over me, I staggered, and fell against the railings.

‘And have you been drinking arter all?’

‘I never—a drop in my life—nothing but bread-and-water this fortnight.’

And it was true. I had been paying for my own food, and had stinted myself to such an extent, that between starvation, want of sleep, and over-exertion, I was worn to a shadow, and the last drop had filled the cup ; the evening's scene and its consequences had been too much for me, and in the middle of an attempt to explain matters to the policeman, I dropped on the pavement, bruising my face heavily.

He picked me up, put me under one arm and my bundle under the other, and was proceeding on his march, when three men came rollicking up.

‘Hullo, Poleax—Costello—What's that? Work for us? A demp unpleasant body!’

‘Oh, Mr. Bromley, sir! Hope you're well, sir! Werry rum go this here, sir! I finds this cove in the streets. He says his mother turned him out o' doors. He seems very fair spoken, and very bad in he's head, and very bad in he's chest, and very bad in he's legs, he does. And I can't come to no conclusions respecting my conduct in this here case, nohow!’

‘Memorialise the Health of Towns Commission,’ suggested one.

‘Bleed him in the great toe,’ said the second.

‘Put a blister on the back of his left eye-ball,’ said a third.

‘Case of male asterisks,’ observed the first. ‘Rj. Aquae pumpis purae quantum suff. Applicatur exterò pro re natâ. J. Bromley, M.D.,—and don't he wish he may get through!’

‘Tip us your daddle, my boy,’ said the second speaker. ‘I'll tell you what, Bromley, this fellow's very bad. He's

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got no more pulse than the Pimlico sewer. Run in into the next pot'us. Here—you lay hold of him, Bromley—that last round with the cabman nearly put my humerus out.'

The huge, burly, pea-jacketed, medical student—for such I saw at once he was—laid hold of me on the right tenderly enough, and walked me off between him and the policeman.

I fell again into a faintness, from which I was awakened by being shoved through the folding-doors of a gin-shop, into a glare of light and hubbub of black-guardism, and placed on a settle, while my conductor called out—

'Pots round, Mary, and a go of brandy hot with for the patient.—Here, young 'un, toss it off, it'll make your hair grow.'

I feebly answered that I never had drunk anything stronger than water.

'High time to begin, then ; no wonder you're so ill. Well, if you won't, I'll make you——'

And taking my head under his arm, he seized me by the nose, while another poured the liquor down my throat—and certainly it revived me at once.

A drunken drab pulled another drunken drab off the settle to make room for the 'poor young man' ; and I sat there with a confused notion that something strange and dreadful had happened to me, while the party drained their respective quarts of porter, and talked over the last boat-race with the Leander.

'Now, then, gen'l'men,' said the policeman, 'if you think he's recovered, we'll take him home to his mother ; she ought for to take him in, surely.'

'Yes, if she has as much heart in her as a dried walnut.'

But I resisted stoutly ; though I longed to vindicate my mother's affection, yet I could not face her. I entreated to be taken to the station-house ; threatened, in my desperation, to break the bar-glasses, which, like Doll Tearsheet's abuse, only elicited from the policeman a

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solemn 'Very well'; and under the unwonted excitement of the brandy, struggled so fiercely, and talked so incoherently, that the medical students interfered.

'We shall have this fellow in phrenitis, or laryngitis or dothenenteritis, or some other itis, before long, if he's aggravated.'

'And whichever it is, it'll kill him. He has no more stamina left than a yard of pump water.'

'I should consider him chargeable to the parish,' suggested the bar-keeper.

'Exactly so, my Solomon of licensed victuallers. Get a workhouse order for him, Costello.'

'And I should consider, also, sir,' said the licensed victualler, with increased importance, 'having been a guardian myself, and knowing the hact, as the parish couldn't refuse, because they're in power to recover all hexpenses out of his mother.'

'To be sure; it's all the unnatural old witch's fault.'

'No, it is not,' said I, faintly.

'Wait till your opinion's asked, young 'un. Go kick up the authorities, policeman.'

'Now, I'll just tell you how that'll work, gemmen,' answered the policeman, solemnly. 'I goes to the overseer—werry good sort o' man—but he's in bed. I knocks for half an hour. He puts his nightcap out o' windy, and sends me to the relieving-officer. Werry good sort o' man he too; but he's in bed. I knocks for another half-hour. He puts his nightcap out o' windy—sends me to the medical officer for a certificate. Medical officer's gone to a midwifery case. I hunts him for an hour or so. He's got hold of a babby with three heads, or summat else; and two more women a-calling out for him like blazes, "He'll come to-morrow morning." Now, I just axes your opinion of that there most procrastinationest go.'

The big student, having cursed the parochial authorities in general, offered to pay for my night's lodging at the public-house. The good man of the house demurred at first, but relented on being reminded of the value of a medical student's custom: whereon, without more ado,

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two of the rough diamonds took me between them, carried me upstairs, undressed me, and put me to bed, as tenderly as if they had been women.

‘He’ll have the tantrums before morning, I’m afraid,’ said one.

‘Very likely to turn to typhus,’ said the other.

‘Well, I suppose—it’s a horrid bore, but

‘What must be must ; man is but dust,
If you can’t get crumb, you must just eat crust.

Send me up a go of hot with, and I’ll sit up with him till he’s asleep, dead, or better.’

‘Well, then, I’ll stay too ; we may just as well make a night of it here as well as anywhere else.’

And he pulled a short black pipe out of his pocket, and sat down to meditate with his feet on the hobs of the empty grate ; the other man went down for the liquor ; while I, between the brandy and exhaustion, fell fast asleep, and never stirred till I woke the next morning with a racking headache, and saw the big student standing by my bedside, having, as I afterwards heard, sat by me till four in the morning.

‘Hallo, young ’un, come to your senses? Headache, eh? Slightly comato-crapulose? We’ll give you some soda and salvolatile, and I’ll pay for your breakfast.’

And so he did, and when he was joined by his companions on their way to St. George’s, they were very anxious, having heard my story, to force a few shillings on me ‘for luck,’ which, I need not say, I peremptorily refused, assuring them that I could and would get my own living, and never take a farthing from any man.

‘That’s a plucky dog, though he’s a tailor,’ I heard them say, as, after overwhelming them with thanks, and vowing, amid shouts of laughter, to repay them every farthing I had cost them, I took my way, sick and stunned, towards my dear old Sandy Mackaye’s street.

Rough diamonds, indeed ! I have never met you again, but I have not forgotten you. Your early life may be a coarse, too often a profligate one—but you know the

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people, and the people know you : and your tenderness and care, bestowed without hope of repayment, cheers daily many a poor soul in hospital wards and fever-cellars—to meet its reward some day at the people's hands. You belong to us at heart, as the Paris barricades can tell. Alas ! for the society which stifles in after-life too many of your better feelings, by making you mere flunkeys and parasites, dependent for your livelihood on the caprices and luxuries of the rich.

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CHAPTER VI

THE DULWICH GALLERY

SANDY MACKAYE received me in a characteristic way—growled at me for half an hour for quarrelling with my mother, and when I was at my wit's end suddenly offered me a bed in his house, and the use of his little sitting-room—and, bliss too great to hope! of his books also; and when I talked of payment, told me to hold my tongue and mind my own business. So I settled myself at once; and that very evening he installed himself as my private tutor, took down a Latin book, and set me to work on it.

‘An’ mind ye, laddie,’ said he, half in jest and half in earnest, ‘gin I find ye playing truant, and reading a’ sorts o’ nonsense instead of minding the scholastic methods and proprieties, I’ll just bring ye in a bill at the year’s end o’ twa guineas a week for lodgings and tuition, and tak’ the law o’ ye; so mind and read what I tell ye. Do you comprehend noo?’

I did comprehend, and obeyed him, determining to repay him some day—and somehow—how I did not very clearly see. Thus I put myself more or less into the old man’s power; foolishly enough the wise world will say. But I had no suspicion in my character; and I could not look at those keen grey eyes, when, after staring into vacancy during some long preachment, they suddenly flashed round at me, and through me, full of fun and quaint thought, and kindly earnestness, and fancy that man less honest than his face seemed to proclaim him.

By the bye, I have as yet given no description of the

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old eccentric's abode—an unpardonable omission, I suppose, in these days of Dutch painting and Boz. But the omission was correct, both historically and artistically, for I had as yet only gone to him for books, nothing but books; and I had been blind to everything in his shop but that fairyland of shelves, filled in my simple fancy, with inexhaustible treasures, wonder-working, omnipotent, as the magic seal of Solomon.

It was not till I had been settled and at work for several nights in his sanctum, behind the shop, that I began to become conscious what a strange den that sanctum was.

It was so dark, that without a gaslight no one but he could see to read there, except on very sunny days. Not only were the shelves which covered every inch of wall crammed with books and pamphlets, but the little window was blocked up with them, the floor was piled with bundles of them, in some places three feet deep, apparently in the wildest confusion—though there was some mysterious order in them which he understood, and symbolised, I suppose, by the various strange and ludicrous nicknames on their tickets—for he never was at fault a moment if a customer asked for a book, though it were buried deep in the chaotic stratum. Out of this book alluvium a hole seemed to have been dug near the fireplace, just big enough to hold his arm-chair and a table, book-strewn like everything else, and garnished with odds and ends of MSS., and a snuffer-tray containing scraps of half-smoked tobacco, 'pipe-dottles,' as he called them, which were carefully re-smoked over and over again, till nothing but ash was left. His whole culinary utensils—for he cooked as well as ate in this strange hole—were an old rusty kettle, which stood on one hob, and a blue plate which, when washed, stood on the other. A barrel of true Aberdeen meal peered out of a corner, half-buried in books, and a 'keg o' whusky, the gift o' freens,' peeped in like case out of another.

This was his only food. 'It was a' poison,' he used to say, 'in London. Bread full o' alum and bones, and sic filth—meat over-driven till it was a' braxy—water sopped

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wi' dead men's juice. Naething was safe but gude Scots parritch and Athol brose.' He carried his water-horror so far as to walk some quarter of a mile every morning to fill his kettle at a favourite pump. 'Was he a cannibal, to drink out o' that pump hard-by right under the kirk-yard?' But it was little he either ate or drank—he seemed to live upon tobacco. From four in the morning till twelve at night the pipe never left his lips, except when he went into the outer shop. 'It promoted meditation, and drove awa' the lusts o' the flesh. Ech! it was worthy o' that auld tyrant, Jamie, to write his counterblast to the poor man's freen! The hypocrite! to gang preaching the virtues o' evil-savoured smoke "ad daemones abigendos,"—and then rail again tobacco, as if it was no as gude for the purpose as auld rags and horn shavings!'

Sandy Mackaye had a great fancy for political caricatures, rows of which, there being no room for them on the walls, hung on strings from the ceiling—like clothes hung out to dry—and among them dangled various books to which he had taken an antipathy, principally High Tory and Benthamite, crucified, impaled through their covers, and suspended in all sorts of torturing attitudes. Among them, right over the table, figured a copy of Icon Basilike dressed up in a paper shirt, all drawn over with figures of flames and devils, and surmounted by a peaked paper cap, like a victim at an *auto-da-fé*. And in the midst of all this chaos grinned from the chimney-piece, among pipes and pens, pinches of salt and scraps of butter, a tall cast of Michael Angelo's well-known skinless model—his pristine white defaced by a cap of soot upon the top of his scalpless skull, and every muscle and tendon thrown into horrible relief by the dirt which had lodged among the cracks. There it stood, pointing with its ghastly arm towards the door, and holding on its wrist a label with the following inscription—

Here stand I, the working man,
Get more off me if you can.

I questioned Mackaye one evening about those hanged

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and crucified books, and asked him if he ever sold any of them.

‘Ou, ay,’ he said ; ‘if folks are fools enough to ask for them, I’ll just answer a fool according to his folly.’

‘But,’ I said, ‘Mr. Mackaye, do you think it right to sell books of the very opinions of which you disapprove so much?’

‘Hoot, laddie, it’s just a spoiling o’ the Egyptians ; so mind yer book, and dinna tak in hand cases o’ conscience for ither folk. Ye’ll ha’ wark eneugh wi’ yer ain before ye’re dune.’

And he folded round his knees his Joseph’s coat, as he called it, an old dressing-gown with one plaid sleeve, and one blue one, red shawl-skirts, and a black broad-cloth back, not to mention innumerable patches of every imaginable stuff and colour, filled his pipe, and buried his nose in Harrington’s *Oceana*. He read at least twelve hours every day of his life, and that exclusively old history and politics, though his favourite books were Thomas Carlyle’s works. Two or three evenings in the week, when he had seen me safe settled at my studies, he used to disappear mysteriously for several hours, and it was some time before I found out, by a chance expression, that he was attending some meeting or committee of working men. I begged him to take me there with him. But I was stopped by a laconic answer—

‘When ye’re ready.’

‘And when shall I be ready, Mr. Mackaye?’

‘Read yer book till I tell ye.’

And he twisted himself into his best coat, which had once been black, squeezed on his little Scotch cap, and went out.

I now found myself, as the reader may suppose, in an element far more congenial to my literary tastes, and which compelled far less privation of sleep and food in order to find time and means for reading ; and my health began to mend from the very first day. But the thought of my mother haunted me ; and Mackaye seemed in no

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hurry to let me escape from it, for he insisted on my writing to her in a penitent strain, informing her of my whereabouts, and offering to return home if she should wish it. With feelings strangely mingled between the desire of seeing her again and the dread of returning to the old drudgery of surveillance, I sent the letter, and waited the whole week without any answer. At last, one evening, when I returned from work, Sandy seemed in a state of unusual exhilaration. He looked at me again and again, winking and chuckling to himself in a way which showed me that his good spirits had something to do with my concerns: but he did not open on the subject till I had settled to my evening's reading. Then, having brewed himself an unusually strong mug of whisky-toddy, and brought out with great ceremony a clean pipe, he commenced.

'Alton, laddie, I've been fechtin' Philistines for ye the day.'

'Ah! have you heard from my mother?'

'I wadna say that exactly; but there's been a gran' bailie body wi' me that calls himsel' your uncle, and a braw young callant, a bairn o' his, I'm thinking.'

'Ah! that's my cousin George; and tell me—do tell me, what you said to them.'

'Ou—that'll be mair concern o' mine than o' yourn. But ye're no going back to your mither.'

My heart leapt up with—joy; there is no denying it—and then I burst into tears.

'And she won't see me? Has she really cast me off?'

'Why, that'll be verra much as ye prosper, I'm thinking. Ye're an unaccredited hero, the noo, as Thomas Carlyle has it. "But gin ye do weel by yoursel'," saith the Psalmist, "ye'll find a' men speak well o' ye"—if ye gang their gate. But ye're to gang to see your uncle at his shop o' Monday next, at one o'clock. Now stint your greeting, and read awa'.'

On the next Monday I took a holiday, the first in which I had ever indulged myself; and having spent a good hour in scrubbing away at my best shoes and Sunday

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suit, started, in fear and trembling, for my uncle's 'establishment.'

I was agreeably surprised, on being shown into the little back office at the back of the shop, to meet with a tolerably gracious reception from the good-natured Mammonite. He did not shake hands with me, it is true ;—was I not a poor relation? But he told me to sit down, commended me for the excellent character which he had of me both from my master and Mackaye, and then entered on the subject of my literary tastes. He heard I was a precious clever fellow. No wonder, I came of a clever stock ; his poor dear brother had plenty of brains for everything but business. 'And you see, my boy' (with a glance at the big ledgers and busy shop without), 'I knew a thing or two in my time, or I should not have been here. But without capital, *I* think brains a curse. Still we must make the best of a bad matter ; and if you are inclined to help to raise the family name—not that I think much of book writers myself—poor starving devils, half of them—but still people do talk about them—and a man might get a snug thing as newspaper editor, with interest ; or clerk to something or other—always some new company in the wind now—and I should have no objection, if you seemed likely to do us credit, to speak a word for you. I've none of your mother's confounded puritanical notions, I can tell you ; and, what's more, I have, thank Heaven, as fine a City connection as any man. But you must mind and make yourself a good accountant—learn double entry on the Italian method—that's a good practical study ; and if that old Sawney is soft enough to teach you other things gratis, he may as well teach you that too. I'll bet he knows something about it—the old Scotch fox. There now—that'll do—there's five shillings for you—mind you don't lose them—and if I hear a good account of you, why, perhaps—but there's no use making promises.'

At this moment a tall handsome young man, whom I did not at first recognise as my cousin George, swung into the office, and shook me cordially by the hand.

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‘Hullo, Alton, how are you? Why, I hear you’re coming out as a regular genius—breaking out in a new place, upon my honour! Have you done with him, governor?’

‘Well, I think I have. I wish you’d have a talk with him, my boy. I’m sorry I can’t see more of him, but I have to meet a party on business at the West End at two, and Alderman Tumbril and family dine with us this evening, don’t they? I think our small table will be full.’

‘Of course it will. Come along with me, and we’ll have a chat in some quiet out-of-the-way place. This City is really so noisy that you can’t hear your own ears, as our dean says in lecture.’

So he carried me off, down back streets and alleys, a little puzzled at the extreme cordiality of his manner. Perhaps it sprung, as I learned afterward to suspect, from his consistent and perpetual habit of ingratiating himself with every one whom he approached. He never cut a chimney-sweep if he knew him. And he found it pay. The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

Perhaps it sprung also, as I began to suspect in the first hundred yards of our walk, from the desire of showing off before me the university clothes, manners, and gossip, which he had just brought back with him from Cambridge.

I had not seen him more than three or four times in my life before, and then he appeared to me merely a tall, handsome, conceited, slangy boy. But I now found him much improved—in all externals at least. He had made it his business, I knew, to perfect himself in all athletic pursuits which were open to a Londoner. As he told me that day—he found it pay, when one got among gentlemen. Thus he had gone up to Cambridge a capital skater, rower, pugilist—and billiard player. Whether or not that last accomplishment ought to be classed in the list of athletic sports, he contrived, by his own account, to keep it in that of paying ones. In both these branches

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he seemed to have had plenty of opportunities of distinguishing himself at college; and his tall, powerful figure showed the fruit of these exercises in a stately and confident, almost martial, carriage. Something jaunty, perhaps swaggering, remained still in his air and dress, which yet sat not ungracefully on him; but I could see that he had been mixing in society more polished and artificial than that to which we had either of us been accustomed, and in his smart Rochester, well-cut trousers, and delicate French boots, he excited, I will not deny it, my boyish admiration and envy.

‘Well,’ he said, as soon as we were out of the shop, ‘which way? Got a holiday? And how did you intend to spend it?’

‘I wanted very much,’ I said, meekly, ‘to see the pictures at the National Gallery.’

‘Oh! ah! pictures don’t pay; but, if you like—much better ones at Dulwich—that’s the place to go to—you can see the others any day—and at Dulwich, you know, they’ve got—why let me see——’ And he ran over half a dozen outlandish names of painters, which, as I have never again met with them, I am inclined on the whole to consider as somewhat extemporaneous creations. However, I agreed to go.

‘Ah! capital—very nice quiet walk, and convenient for me—very little out of my way home. I’ll walk there with you.’

‘One word for your neighbour and two for yourself,’ thought I; but on we walked. To see good pictures had been a long cherished hope of mine. Everything beautiful in form or colour was beginning of late to have an intense fascination for me. I had, now that I was emancipated, gradually dared to feed my greedy eyes by passing stares into the print-shop windows, and had learnt from them a thousand new notions, new emotions, new longings after beauties of Nature, which seemed destined never to be satisfied. But pictures, above all, foreign ones, had been in my mother’s eyes, Anathema Maranatha, as vile Popish and Pagan vanities, the rags of the scarlet woman no less

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than the surplice itself—and now, when it came to the point, I hesitated at an act of such awful disobedience, even though unknown to her. My cousin, however, laughed down my scruples, told me I was out of leading-strings now, and, which was true enough, that it was ‘a * * * deal better to amuse oneself, in picture galleries without leave, than live a life of sneaking and lying under petticoat government, as all home-birds were sure to do in the long-run.’ And so I went on, while my cousin kept up a running fire of chat the whole way, intermixing shrewd, bold observations upon every woman who passed, with sneers at the fellows of the college to which we were going—their idleness and luxury—the large grammar-school which they were bound by their charter to keep up, and did not—and hints about private interest in high quarters, through which their wealthy uselessness had been politely overlooked, when all similar institutions in the kingdom were subject to the searching examination of a Government commission. Then there were stories of boat-races and gay noblemen, breakfast parties, and lectures on Greek plays flavoured with a spice of Cambridge slang, all equally new to me—glimpses into a world of wonders, which made me feel, as I shambled along at his side, trying to keep step with his strides, more weakly and awkward and ignorant than ever.

We entered the gallery. I was in a fever of expectation.

The rich sombre light of the rooms, the rich heavy warmth of the stove-heated air, the brilliant and varied colouring and gilded frames which embroidered the walls, the hushed earnestness of a few artists, who were copying, and the few visitors who were lounging from picture to picture, struck me at once with mysterious awe. But my attention was in a moment concentrated on one figure opposite to me at the farthest end. I hurried straight toward it. When I had got half-way up the gallery I looked round for my cousin. He had turned aside to some picture of a Venus which caught my eye also, but which, I remember now, only raised in me then a shudder and a blush, and a fancy that the clergymen must be

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really as bad as my mother had taught me to believe, if they could allow in their galleries pictures of undressed women. I have learnt to view such things differently now, thank God. I have learnt that to the pure all things are pure. I have learnt the meaning of that great saying—the foundation of all art, as well as all modesty, all love, which tells us how ‘the man and his wife were both naked, and not ashamed.’ But this book is the history of my mental growth ; and my mistakes as well as my discoveries are steps in that development, and may bear a lesson in them.

How I have rambled ! But as that day was the turning-point of my whole short life, I may be excused for lingering upon every feature of it.

Timidly, but eagerly, I went up to the picture, and stood entranced before it. It was Guido’s St. Sebastian. All the world knows the picture, and all the world knows, too, the defects of the master, though in this instance he seems to have risen above himself, by a sudden inspiration, into that true naturalness, which is the highest expression of the Spiritual. But the very defects of the picture, its exaggeration, its theatricality, were especially calculated to catch the eye of a boy awaking out of the narrow dulness of Puritanism. The breadth and vastness of light and shade upon those manly limbs, so grand and yet so delicate, standing out against the background of lurid night, the helplessness of the bound arms, the arrow quivering in the shrinking side, the upturned brow, the eyes in whose dark depths enthusiastic faith seemed conquering agony and shame, the parted lips, which seemed to ask, like those martyrs in the Revelations, reproachful, half-resigned, ‘O Lord, how long ?’—— Gazing at that picture since, I have understood how the idolatry of painted saints could arise in the minds even of the most educated, who were not disciplined by that stern regard for fact which is—or ought to be—the strength of Englishmen. I have understood the heart of that Italian girl, whom some such picture of St. Sebastian, perhaps this very one, excited, as the Venus of Praxiteles the

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Grecian boy, to hopeless love, madness, and death. Then I had never heard of St. Sebastian. I did not dream of any connection between that, or indeed any picture, and Christianity; and yet, as I stood before it, I seemed to be face to face with the ghosts of my old Puritan forefathers, to see the spirit which supported them on pillories and scaffolds—the spirit of that true St. Margaret, the Scottish maiden whom Claverhouse and his soldiers chained to a post on the sea-sands to die by inches in the rising tide, till the sound of her hymns was slowly drowned in the dash of the hungry leaping waves. My heart swelled within me, my eyes seemed bursting from my head with the intensity of my gaze, and great tears, I knew not why, rolled slowly down my face.

A woman's voice close to me, gentle yet of deeper tone than most, woke me from my trance.

‘ You seem to be deeply interested in that picture? ’

I looked round, yet not at the speaker. My eyes, before they could meet hers, were caught by an apparition the most beautiful I had ever yet beheld. And what—what—have I seen equal to her since? Strange, that I should love to talk of her. Strange, that I fret at myself now because I cannot set down on paper line by line, and hue by hue, that wonderful loveliness of which—— But no matter. Had I but such an imagination as Petrarch, or rather, perhaps, had I his deliberate cold self-consciousness, what volumes of similes and conceits I might pour out, connecting that peerless face and figure with all lovely things which heaven and earth contain. As it is, because I cannot say all, I will say nothing, but repeat to the end again and again, Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beyond all statue, picture, or poet's dream. Seventeen—slight but rounded, a masque and features delicate and regular, as if fresh from the chisel of Praxiteles—I must try to describe after all, you see—a skin of alabaster (privet-flowers, Horace and Ariosto would have said, more true to Nature), stained with the faintest flush; auburn hair, with that peculiar crisped wave seen in the old Italian pictures, and the warm, dark hazel eyes which so often accompany it;

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lips like a thread of vermilion, somewhat too thin, perhaps—but I thought little of that then; with such perfect finish and grace in every line and hue of her features and her dress, down to the little fingers and nails, which showed through her thin gloves, that she seemed to my fancy fresh from the innermost chamber of some enchanted palace, ‘where no air of heaven could visit her cheek too roughly.’ I dropped my eyes quite dazzled. The question was repeated by a lady who stood with her, whose face I remarked then—as I did to the last, alas!—too little; dazzled at the first by outward beauty, perhaps because so utterly unaccustomed to it.

‘It is indeed a wonderful picture,’ I said, timidly. ‘May I ask what is the subject of it?’

‘Oh! don’t you know?’ said the young beauty, with a smile that thrilled through me. ‘It is St. Sebastian.’

‘I—I am very much ashamed,’ I answered, colouring up, ‘but I do not know who St. Sebastian was. Was he a Popish saint?’

A tall, stately old man, who stood with the two ladies, laughed kindly. ‘No, not till they made him one against his will; and at the same time, by putting him into the mill which grinds old folks young again, converted him from a grizzled old Roman tribune into the young Apollo of Popery.’

‘You will puzzle your hearer, my dear uncle,’ said the same deep-toned woman’s voice which had first spoken to me. ‘As you volunteered the saint’s name, Lillian, you shall also tell his history.’

Simply and shortly, with just feeling enough to send through me a fresh thrill of delighted interest, without trenching the least on the most stately reserve, she told me the well-known history of the saint’s martyrdom.

If I seem minute in my description, let those who read my story remember that such courteous dignity, however natural, I am bound to believe, it is to them, was to me an utterly new excellence in human nature. All my mother’s Spartan nobleness of manner seemed unexpectedly combined with all my little sister’s careless ease.

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‘What a beautiful poem the story would make!’ said I, as soon as I recovered my thoughts.

‘Well spoken, young man,’ answered the old gentleman. ‘Let us hope that your seeing a subject for a good poem will be the first step towards your writing one.’

As he spoke, he bent on me two clear grey eyes, full of kindness, mingled with practised discernment. I saw that he was evidently a clergyman; but what his tight silk stockings and peculiar hat denoted I did not know. There was about him the air of a man accustomed equally to thought, to men, and to power. And I remarked somewhat maliciously, that my cousin, who had strutted up towards us on seeing me talking to two ladies, the instant he caught sight of those black silk stockings and that strange hat, fell suddenly in countenance, and sidling off somewhat meekly into the background, became absorbed in the examination of a Holy Family.

I answered something humbly, I forget what, which led to a conversation. They questioned me as to my name, my mother, my business, my studies; while I revelled in the delight of stolen glances at my new-found Venus Victrix, who was as forward as any of them in her questions and her interest. Perhaps she enjoyed, at least she could not help seeing, the admiration for herself which I took no pains to conceal. At last the old man cut the conversation short by a quiet ‘Good morning, sir,’ which astonished me. I had never heard words whose tone was so courteous and yet so chillingly peremptory. As they turned away, he repeated to himself once or twice, as if to fix them in his mind, my name and my master’s, and awoke in me, perhaps too thoughtlessly, a tumult of vain hopes. Once and again the beauty and her companion looked back towards me, and seemed talking of me, and my face was burning scarlet, when my cousin swung up in his hard, off-hand way.

‘By Jove, Alton, my boy! you’re a knowing fellow. I congratulate you! At your years, indeed! to rise a dean and two beauties at the first throw, and hook them fast!’

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‘A dean!’ I said, in some trepidation.

‘Ay, a live dean—didn’t you see the cloven foot sticking out from under his shoe-buckle? What news for your mother! What will the ghosts of your grandfathers to the seventh generation say to this, Alton? Colloquing in Pagan picture galleries with shovel-hatted Philistines! And that’s not the worst, Alton,’ he ran on. ‘Those daughters of Moab—those daughters of Moab——’

‘Hold your tongue,’ I said, almost crying with vexation.

‘Look there, if you want to save your good temper. There, she is looking back again—not at poor me, though. What a lovely girl she is!—and a real lady—*l’air noble*—the rael genuine grit, as Sam Slick says, and no mistake. By Jove, what a face! what hands! what feet! what a figure—in spite of crinolines and all abominations! And didn’t she know it? And didn’t she know that you knew it too?’ And he ran on descanting coarsely on beauties which I dared not even have profaned by naming, in a way that made me, I knew not why, mad with jealousy and indignation. She seemed mine alone in all the world. What right had any other human being, above all, he, to dare to mention her? I turned again to my St. Sebastian. That movement only brought on me a fresh volley of banter.

‘Oh, that’s the dodge, is it, to catch intellectual fine ladies?—to fall into an ecstatic attitude before a picture—But then we must have Alton’s genius, you know, to find out which the fine pictures are. I must read up that subject, by the bye. It might be a paying one among the dons. For the present, here goes in for an attitude. Will this do, Alton?’ And he arranged himself admirably before the picture in an attitude so absurd and yet so graceful, that I did not know whether to laugh at him or hate him.

‘At all events,’ he added, drily, ‘it will be as good as playing the Evangelical at Carus’s tea-parties, or taking the sacrament regularly for fear one’s testimonials should be refused.’ And then he looked at me, and through me,

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in his intense, confident way, to see that his hasty words had not injured him with me. He used to meet one's eye as boldly as any man I ever saw ; but it was not the simple gaze of honesty and innocence, but an imperious, searching look, as if defying scrutiny. His was a true mesmeric eye, if ever there was one. No wonder it worked the miracles it did.

‘Come along,’ he said, suddenly seizing my arm. ‘Don’t you see they’re leaving? Out of the gallery after them, and get a good look of the carriage and the arms upon it. I saw one standing there as we came in. It may pay us—you, that is—to know it again.’

We went out, I holding him back, I knew not why, and arrived at the outer gate just in time to see them enter the carriage and drive off. I gazed to the last, but did not stir.

‘Good boy,’ he said, ‘knowing still. If you had bowed, or showed the least sign of recognition, you would have broken the spell.’

But I hardly heard what he said, and stood gazing stupidly after the carriage as it disappeared. I did not know then what had happened to me. I know now, alas ! too well.

CHAPTER VII

FIRST LOVE

TRULY I said, I did not know what had happened to me. I did not attempt to analyse the intense, overpowering instinct which from that moment made the lovely vision I had seen the lodestar of all my thoughts. Even now, I can see nothing in those feelings of mine but simple admiration—idolatry, if you will—of physical beauty. Doubtless there was more—doubtless—I had seen pretty faces before, and knew that they were pretty, but they had passed from my retina, like the prints of beauties which I saw in the shop windows, without exciting a thought—even a conscious emotion of complacency. But this face did not pass away. Day and night I saw it, just as I had seen it in the gallery. The same playful smile—the same glance alternately turned to me, and the glowing picture above her head—and that was all I saw or felt. No child ever nestled upon its mother's shoulder with feelings more celestially pure, than those with which I counted over day and night each separate lineament of that exceeding loveliness. Romantic? extravagant? Yes; if the world be right in calling a passion romantic just in proportion as it is not merely hopeless, but pure and unselfish, drawing its delicious power from no hope or faintest desire of enjoyment, but merely from simple delight in its object—then my passion was most romantic. I never thought of disparity in rank. Why should I? That could not blind the eyes of my imagination. She was beautiful, and that was all, and all in all to me; and had

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our stations been exchanged, and more than exchanged ; had I been King Cophetua, or she the beggar-maid, I should have gloried in her just as much.

Beloved sleepless hours, which I spent in picturing that scene to myself, with all the brilliance of fresh recollection? Beloved hours! how soon you pass away! Soon—soon my imagination began to fade; the traces of her features on my mind's eye became confused and dim; and then came over me the fierce desire to see her again, that I might renew the freshness of that charming image. Thereon grew up an agony of longing—an agony of weeks, and months, and years. Where could I find that face again? was my ruling thought from morning till eve. I knew that it was hopeless to look for her at the gallery where I had first seen her. My only hope was, that at some place of public resort at the West End I might catch, if but for a moment, an inspiring glance of that radiant countenance. I lingered round the Burton Arch and Hyde Park Gate—but in vain. I peered into every carriage, every bonnet that passed me in the thoroughfares—in vain. I stood patiently at the doors of exhibitions and concerts, and play-houses, to be shoved back by policemen, and insulted by footmen—but in vain. Then I tried the fashionable churches, one by one; and sat in the free seats, to listen to prayers and sermons, not a word of which, alas! I cared to understand, with my eyes searching carefully every pew and gallery, face by face; always fancying, in self-torturing waywardness, that she might be just in the part of the gallery which I could not see. Oh! miserable days of hope deferred, making the heart sick! Miserable gnawing of disappointment with which I returned at nightfall, to force myself down to my books! Equally miserable rack of hope on which my nerves were stretched every morning when I rose, counting the hours till my day's work should be over, and my mad search begin again! At last 'my torment did by length of time become my element.' I returned steadily as ever to the studies which I had at first neglected, much to Mackaye's wonder and disgust; and a vain hunt after

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that face became a part of my daily task, to be got through with the same dull, sullen effort, with which all I did was now transacted.

Mackaye, I suppose, at first, attributed my absences and idleness to my having got into bad company. But it was some weeks before he gently enough told me his suspicions, and they were answered by a burst of tears, and a passionate denial, which set them at rest for ever. But I had not courage to tell him what was the matter with me. A sacred modesty, as well as a sense of the impossibility of explaining my emotions, held me back. I had a half-dread, too, to confess the whole truth, of his ridiculing a fancy, to say the least, so utterly impracticable; and my only confidant was a picture in the National Gallery, in one of the faces of which I had discovered some likeness to my Venus; and there I used to go and stand at spare half-hours, and feel the happier for staring and staring, and whispering to the dead canvas the extravagances of my idolatry.

But soon the bitter draught of disappointment began to breed harsher thoughts in me. Those fine gentlemen who rode past me in the park, who rolled by in carriages, sitting face to face with ladies, as richly dressed, if not as beautiful, as she was—they could see her when they liked—why not I? What right had their eyes to a feast denied to mine? They, too, who did not appreciate, adore that beauty as I did—for who could worship her like me? At least they had not suffered for her as I had done; they had not stood in rain and frost, fatigue, and blank despair—watching—watching—month after month; and I was making coats for them! The very garment I was stitching at, might, in a day's time, be in her presence—touching her dress; and its wearer bowing, and smiling, and whispering—he had not bought that bliss by watching in the rain. It made me mad to think of it.

I will say no more about it. That is a period of my life on which I cannot even now look back without a shudder.

At last, after perhaps a year or more, I summoned up

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courage to tell my story to Sandy Mackaye, and burst out with complaints more pardonable, perhaps, than reasonable.

‘Why have I not as good a right to speak to her, to move in the same society in which she moves, as any of the fops of the day? Is it because these aristocrats are more intellectual than I? I should not fear to measure brains against most of them now; and give me the opportunities which they have, and I would die if I did not outstrip them. Why have I not those opportunities? Is that fault of others to be visited on me? Is it because they are more refined than I? What right have they, if this said refinement be so necessary a qualification, a difference so deep—that, without it, there is to be an everlasting gulf between man and man—what right have they to refuse to let me share in it, to give me the opportunity of acquiring it?’

‘Wad ye ha’ them set up a dancing academy for working men, wi’ “manners tocht here to the lower classes”? They’ll no break up their ain monopoly; trust them for it! Na: if ye want to get amang them, I’ll tell ye the way o’t. Write a book o’ poems, and ca’ it “A Voice fra’ the Goose, by a working Tailor”—and then—why, after a dizen years or so of starving and scribbling for your bread, ye’ll ha’ a chance o’ finding yoursel’ a lion, and a flunkey, and a lickie o’ trenchers—an’ that jokes for his dinner, and sells his soul for a fine leddy’s smile—till ye presume to think they’re in earnest, and fancy yoursel’ a man o’ the same blude as they, and fa’ in love wi’ one o’ them—and then they’ll teach you your level, and send ye off to gauge whusky like Burns, or leave ye to die in a ditch as they did wi’ puir Thom.’

‘Let me die, anywhere or anyhow, if I can but be near her—see her——’

‘Married to anither body?—and nursing anither body’s bairns. Ah boy, boy—do ye think that was what ye were made for; to please yersel’ wi’ a woman’s smiles, or e’en a woman’s kisses, or to please yersel’ at all? How do ye expect ever to be happy, or strong, or a man at a’,

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as long as ye go on looking to enjoy yersel'—yersel'? I ha' tried it. Mony was the year I looked for nought but my ain pleasure, and got it too, when it was a'

'Sandy Mackaye, bonny Sandy Mackaye,
There he sits singing the lang simmer's day ;
Lassies gae to him,
And kiss him, and woo him—
Na bird is sa merry as Sandy Mackaye.

An' muckle good cam' o't. Ye may fancy I'm talking like a sour, disappointed auld carle. But I tell ye nay. I've got that's worth living for, though I am downhearted at times, and fancy a's wrong, and there's na hope for us on earth, we be a' sic liars—a' liars, I think : "a universal liars-rock substrawtum," as Mr. Carlyle says. I'm a great liar often mysel', especially when I'm praying. Do ye think I'd live on here in this meeserable crankit auld bane-barrel o' a body, if it was not for The Cause, and for the puir young fellows that come in to me whiles to get some book-learning about the gran' auld Roman times, when folks didna care for themselves, but for the nation, and a man counted wife and bairns and money as dross and dung, in comparison wi' the great Roman city, that was the mither o' them a', and wad last on, free and glorious, after they and their bairns were a' dead thegither? Hoot, man! If I had na The Cause to care for and to work for, whether I ever see it triumphant on earth or no—I'd just tak' the cauld-water-cure off Waterloo Bridge, and mak' mysel' a case for the Humane Society.'

'And what is The Cause?' I asked.

'Wud I tell ye? We want no ready-made freens o' The Cause. I dinna hauld wi' thae French indoctrinating pedants, that took to stick free opinions into a man as ye'd stick pins into a pincushion, to fa' out again the first shake. Na—The Cause must find a man, and tak' hauld o' him, willy-nilly, and grow up in him like an inspiration, till he can see nocht but in the light o't. Puir bairn!' he went on, looking with a half-sad, half-comic face at me—'puir bairn—like a young bear, wi' a' your

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sorrows before ye! This time seven years ye'll ha' no need to come speering and questioning what The Cause is, and the Gran' Cause, and the Only Cause worth working for on the earth o' God. And noo gang your gate, and mak' fine feathers for foul birds. I'm gaun whar ye'll be ganging too, before lang.'

As I went sadly out of the shop, he called me back.

'Stay a wee, bairn; there's the Roman History for ye. There ye'll read what The Cause is, and how they that seek their ain are no worthy thereof.'

I took the book, and found in the legends of Brutus, and Cocles, and Scaevola, and the retreat to the Mons Sacer, and the Gladiators' war, what The Cause was, and forgot awhile in those tales of antique heroism and patriotic self-sacrifice my own selfish longings and sorrows.

But, after all, the very advice which was meant to cure me of those selfish longings, only tended, by diverting me from my living outward idol, to turn my thoughts more than ever inward, and tempt them to feed on their own substance. I passed whole days on the workroom floor in brooding silence—my mind peopled with an incoherent rabble of phantasms patched up from every object of which I had ever read. I could not control my day-dreams; they swept me away with them over sea and land, and into the bowels of the earth. My soul escaped on every side from my civilised dungeon of brick and mortar, into the great free world from which my body was debarred. Now I was the corsair in the pride of freedom on the dark blue sea. Now I wandered in fairy caverns among the bones of primæval monsters. I fought at the side of Leonidas, and the Maccabee who stabbed the Sultan's elephant, and saw him crushed beneath its falling bulk. Now I was a hunter in tropic forests—I heard the parrots scream, and saw the humming-birds flit on from gorgeous flower to flower. Gradually I took a voluntary pleasure in calling up these images, and working out their details into words with all the accuracy and

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care for which my small knowledge gave me materials. And as the self-indulgent habit grew on me, I began to live two lives—one mechanical and outward, one inward and imaginative. The thread passed through my fingers without my knowing it ; I did my work as a machine might do it. The dingy stifling room, the wan faces of my companions, the scanty meals which I snatched, I saw dimly, as in a dream. The tropics, and Greece, the imaginary battles which I fought, the phantoms into whose mouths I put my thoughts, were real and true to me. They met me when I woke—they floated along beside me as I walked to work—they acted their fantastic dramas before me through the sleepless hours of night. Gradually certain faces among them became familiar—certain personages grew into coherence, as embodiments of those few types of character which had struck me the most, and played an analogous part in every fresh fantasia. Sandy Mackaye's face figured incongruously enough as Leonidas, Brutus, a Pilgrim Father ; and gradually, in spite of myself, and the fear with which I looked on the recurrence of that dream, Lillian's figure re-entered my fairyland. I saved her from a hundred dangers ; I followed her through dragon-guarded caverns and the corridors of magic castles ; I walked by her side through the forests of the Amazon. . . .

And now I began to crave for some means of expressing these fancies to myself. While they were mere thoughts, parts of me, they were unsatisfactory, however delicious. I longed to put them outside me, that I might look at them and talk to them as permanent independent things. First I tried to sketch them on the whitewashed walls of my garret, on scraps of paper begged from Mackaye, or picked up in the workroom. But from my ignorance of any rules of drawing they were utterly devoid of beauty, and only excited my disgust. Besides, I had thoughts as well as objects to express—thoughts strange, sad, wild, about my own feelings, my own destiny, and drawing could not speak them for me.

Then I turned instinctively to poetry : with its rules

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I was getting rapidly conversant. The mere desire of imitation urged me on, and when I tried, the grace of rhyme and metre covered a thousand defects. I tell my story, not as I saw it then, but as I see it now. A long and lonely voyage, with its monotonous days and sleepless nights—its sickness and heart-loneliness, has given me opportunities for analysing my past history which were impossible then, amid the ceaseless in-rush of new images, the ceaseless ferment of their re-combination, in which my life was passed from sixteen to twenty-five. The poet, I suppose, must be a seer as long as he is a worker, and a seer only. He has no time to philosophise—to ‘think about thinking,’ as Goethe, I have somewhere read, says that he never could do. It is too often only in sickness and prostration and sheer despair, that the fierce veracity and swift digestion of his soul can cease, and give him time to know himself and God’s dealings with him ; and for that reason it is good for him, too, to have been afflicted.

I do not write all this to boast of it ; I am ready to bear sneers at my romance—my day-dreams—my unpractical habits of mind, for I know that I deserve them. But such was the appointed growth of my uneducated mind ; no more unhealthy a growth, if I am to believe books, than that of many a carefully trained one. High-born geniuses, they tell me, have their idle visions as well as we working men ; and Oxford has seen of late years as wild Icarias conceived as ever were fathered by a red Republic. For, indeed, we have the same flesh and blood, the same God to teach us, the same devil to mislead us, whether we choose to believe it or not. But there were excuses for me. We Londoners are not accustomed from our youth to the poems of a great democratic genius, as the Scotchmen are to their glorious Burns. We have no chance of such an early acquaintance with poetic art as that which enabled John Bethune, one of the great unrepresented—the starving Scotch day-labourer, breaking stones upon the parish roads, to write at the age of seventeen such words as these :—

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Hail, hallow'd evening ! sacred hour to me !
Thy clouds of grey, thy vocal melody,
Thy dreamy silence oft to me have brought
A sweet exchange from toil to peaceful thought.
Ye purple heavens ! how often has my eye,
Wearied with its long gaze on drudgery,
Look'd up and found refreshment in the hues
That gild thy vest with colouring profuse !

O, evening grey ! how oft have I admired
Thy airy tapestry, whose radiance fired
The glowing minstrels of the olden time,
Until their very souls flow'd forth in rhyme.
And I have listened, till my spirit grew
Familiar with their deathless strains, and drew
From the same source some portion of the glow
Which fill'd their spirits, when from earth below
They scann'd thy golden imagery. And I
Have consecrated *thee*, bright evening sky
My fount of inspiration ; and I fling
My spirit on thy clouds—an offering
To the great Deity of dying day,
Who hath transfused o'er thee his purple ray.

.

After all, our dreams do little harm to the rich. Those who consider Chartism as synonymous with devil-worship, should bless and encourage them, for the very reason for which we working men ought to dread them ; for, quickened into prurient activity by the low, novel-mongering press, they help to enervate and besot all but the noblest minds among us. Here and there a Thomas Cooper, sitting in Stafford gaol, after a youth spent in cobbling shoes, vents his treasures of classic and historic learning in a *Purgatory of Suicides* ; or a Prince becomes the poet of the poor, no less for having fed his boyish fancy with *The Arabian Nights* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. But, with the most of us, sedentary and monotonous occupations, as has long been known, create of themselves a morbidly-meditative and fantastic turn of mind. And what else, in Heaven's name, ye fine gentlemen—what else can a working man do with his imagination, but dream ? What else will you let him do with it, oh ye education-pedants, who fancy that you can teach the

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masses as you would drill soldiers, every soul alike, though you will not bestir yourselves to do even that? Are there no differences of rank—God's rank, not man's—among us? You have discovered, since your schoolboy days, the fallacy of the old nomenclature which civilly classed us all together as 'the snobs,' 'the blackguards'; which even—so strong is habit—tempted Burke himself to talk of us as 'the swinish multitude.' You are finding yourselves wrong there. A few more years' experience not in mis-educating the poor, but in watching the poor really educate themselves, may teach you that we are not all by nature dolts and idiots; that there are differences of brain among us, just as great as there is between you; and that there are those among us whose education ought not to end, and will not end, with the putting off of the parish cap and breeches; whom it is cruelty, as well as folly, to toss back into the hell of mere manual drudgery, as soon as you have—if, indeed, you have been even so bountiful as that—excited in them a new thirst of the intellect and imagination. If you provide that craving with no wholesome food, you at least have no right to blame it if it shall gorge itself with poison.

Dare for once to do a strange thing, and let yourself be laughed at; go to a workman's meeting—a Chartist meeting, if you will; and look honestly at the faces and brows of those so-called incendiaries, whom your venal caricaturists have taught you to believe a mixture of cur-dog and baboon—we, for our part, shall not be ashamed to show foreheads against your laughing House of Commons—and then say, what employment can those men find in the soulless routine of mechanical labour for the mass of brain which they almost universally possess? They must either dream or agitate; perhaps they are now learning how to do both to some purpose.

But I have found, by sad experience, that there is little use in declamation. I had much better simply tell my story, and leave my readers to judge of the facts, if, indeed, they will be so far courteous as to believe them.

CHAPTER VIII

LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE

So I made my first attempt at poetry—need I say that my subject was the beautiful Lillian? And need I say, too, that I was as utterly disgusted at my attempt to express her in words, as I had been at my trial with the pencil? It chanced also, that after hammering out half a dozen verses, I met with Mr. Tennyson's poems; and the unequalled sketches of women that I found there, while they had, with the rest of the book, a new and abiding influence on my mind, were quite enough to show me my own fatal incompetency in that line. I threw my verses away, never to resume them. Perhaps I proved thereby the depth of my affection. Our mightiest feelings are always those which remain most unspoken. The most intense lovers and the greatest poets have generally, I think, written very little personal love-poetry, while they have shown in fictitious characters a knowledge of the passion too painfully intimate to be spoken of in the first person.

But to escape from my own thoughts, I could not help writing something; and to escape from my own private sorrows, writing on some matter with which I had no personal concern. And so, after much casting about for subjects, Childe Harold and the old missionary records contrived to celebrate a spiritual wedding in my brain, of which anomalous marriage came a proportionately anomalous offspring.

My hero was not to be a pirate, but a pious sea-rover,

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who, with a crew of saints, or at least uncommonly fine fellows, who could be very manly and jolly, and yet all be good Christians, of a somewhat vague and latitudinarian cast of doctrine (for my own was becoming rapidly so), set forth under the red-cross flag to colonise and convert one of my old paradises, a South Sea Island.

I forget most of the lines—they were probably great trash, but I hugged them to my bosom as a young mother does her first child.

'Twas sunset in the lone Pacific world,
The rich gleams fading in the western sky ;
Within the still Lagoon the sails were furled,
The red-cross flag alone was flaunting high.
Before them was the low and palm-fringed shore,
Behind, the outer ocean's baffled roar.

After which valiant plunge *in medias res*, came a great lump of deception, after the manner of youths—of the island, and the white houses, and the banana groves, and above all, the single volcano towering over the whole, which

Shaking a sinful isle with thundering shocks,
Reproved the worshippers of stones and stocks.

Then how a line of foam appears on the Lagoon, which is supposed at first to be a shoal of fish, but turns out to be a troop of naked island beauties, swimming out to the ship. The decent missionaries were certainly guiltless of putting that into my head, whether they ever saw it or not—a great many things happening in the South Seas of which they find it convenient to say nothing. I think I picked it up from Wallis, or Cook, or some other plain-spoken voyager.

The heroic gaze in pardonable admiration, but the hero, in a long speech, reproves them for their light-mindedness, reminds them of their sacred mission, and informs them that

The soldiers of the cross should turn their eyes
From carnal lusts and heathen vanities ;

beyond which indisputable assertion I never got ; for

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this being about the fiftieth stanza, I stopped to take breath a little ; and reading and re-reading, patching and touching continually, grew so accustomed to my bantling's face, that, like a mother, I could not tell whether it was handsome or hideous, sense or nonsense. I have since found out that the true plan, for myself at least, is to write off as much as possible at a time, and then lay it by and forget it for weeks—if I can, for months. After that, on returning to it, the mind regards it as something altogether strange and new, and can, or rather ought to, judge of it as it would of the work of another pen.

But really, between conceit and disgust, fancying myself one day a great new poet, and the next a mere twaddler, I got so puzzled and anxious, that I determined to pluck up courage, go to Mackaye, and ask him to solve the problem for me.

'Hech, sirs, poetry! I've been expecting it. I suppose it's the appointed gate o' a workman's intellectual life—that same lust o' versification. Aweel, aweel,—let's hear.'

Blushing and trembling, I read my verses aloud in as resonant and magniloquent a voice as I could command. I thought Mackaye's upper lip would never stop lengthening, or his lower lip protruding. He chuckled intensely at the unfortunate rhyme between 'shocks' and 'stocks'—indeed, it kept him in chuckling matter for a whole month afterwards ; but when I had got to the shoal of naked girls, he could bear no more, and burst out—

'What the deevil! is there no harlotry and idolatry here in England, that ye maun gang speering after it in the Cannibal Islands? Are ye gaun to be like thae puir aristocrat bodies, that wad suner hear an Italian dog howl than an English nightingale sing, and winna harken to Mr. John Thomas till he calls himself Giovanni Thomasino ; or do ye tak' yourself for a singing-bird, to go all your days tweedle-dum-deeing out into the lift, just for the lust o' hearing your ain clan clatter? Will ye be a man or a lintie? Coral Islands? Pacific? What do ye ken about Pacifics? Are ye a Cockney or a Cannibal

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Islander? Dinna stand there, ye gowk, as fusionless as a docken, but tell me that! Whaur do ye live?’

‘What do you mean, Mr. Mackaye?’ asked I, with a doleful and disappointed visage.

‘Mean—why, if God had meant ye to write aboot Pacifics, He’d ha’ put ye there—and because He means ye to write aboot London town He’s put ye there—and gien ye an unco sharp taste o’ the ways o’t; and I’ll gie ye anither. Come along wi’ me.’

And he seized me by the arm, and hardly giving me time to put on my hat, marched me out into the streets, and away through Clare Market to St. Giles’s.

It was a foul, chilly, foggy Saturday night. From the butchers’ and greengrocers’ shops the gaslights flared and flickered, wild and ghastly, over haggard groups of slipshod dirty women, bargaining for scraps of stale meat and frost-bitten vegetables, wrangling about short weight and bad quality. Fish-stalls and fruit-stalls lined the edge of the greasy pavement, sending up odours as foul as the language of sellers and buyers. Blood and sewer-water crawled from under doors and out of spouts, and reeked down the gutters among offal, animal and vegetable, in every stage of putrefaction. Foul vapours rose from cowsheds and slaughter-houses, and the doorways of undrained alleys, where the inhabitants carried the filth out on their shoes from the backyard into the court, and from the court up into the main street; while above, hanging like cliffs over the streets—those narrow, brawling torrents of filth, and poverty, and sin,—the houses with their teeming load of life were piled up into the dingy, choking night. A ghastly, deafening, sickening sight it was. Go, scented Belgravian! and see what London is! and then go to the library which God has given thee—one often fears in vain—and see what science says this London might be!

‘Ay,’ he muttered to himself, as he strode along, ‘sing awa’; get yoursel’ wi’ child wi’ pretty fancies and gran’ words, like the rest o’ the poets, and gang to hell for it.’

‘To hell, Mr. Mackaye?’

‘Ay, to a verra real hell, Alton Locke, laddie—a warse

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ane than ony fiends' kitchen, or subterranean Smithfield that ye'll hear o' in the pulpits—the hell on earth o' being a flunkey, and a humbug, and a useless peacock, wasting God's gifts on your ain lusts and pleasures—and kenning it—and not being able to get oot o' it, for the chains o' vanity and self-indulgence. I've warn'd ye. Now look there——'

He stopped suddenly before the entrance of a miserable alley.

'Look! there's not a soul down that yard but's either beggar, drunkard, thief, or warse. Write anent that! Say how you saw the mouth o' hell, and the twa pillars thereof at the entry—the pawnbroker's shop o' one side, and the gin palace at the other—two monstrous deevils, eating up men, and women, and bairns, body and soul. Look at the jaws o' the monsters, how they open and open, and swallow in anither victim and anither. Write anent that.'

'What jaws, Mr. Mackaye?'

'Thae faulding-doors o' the gin-shop, goose. Are na they a mair damnable man-devouring idol than ony red-hot statue o' Moloch, or wicker Gogmagog, wherein thae auld Britons burnt their prisoners? Look at thae bare-footed bare-backed hizzies, with their arms roun' the men's necks, and their mouths full o' vitriol and beastly words! Look at that Irishwoman pouring the gin down the babbie's throat! Look at that rough o' a boy gaun out o' the pawn-shop, where he's been pledging the handkerchief he stole the morning, into the gin-shop, to buy beer poisoned wi' grains o' paradise, and cocculus indicus, and saut, and a' damnable, maddening, thirst-breeding, lust-breeding drugs! Look at that girl that went in wi' a shawl on her back and came out wi'out ane! Drunkards frae the breast!—harlots frae the cradle! damned before they're born! John Calvin had an inkling o' the truth there, I'm a'most driven to think, wi' his reprobation deevil's doctrines!'

'Well—but—Mr. Mackaye, I know nothing about these poor creatures.'

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‘Then ye ought. What do ye ken anent the Pacific? What is maist to your business?—thae bare-backed hizzies that play the harlot o’ the other side o’ the warld, or these—these thousands o’ bare-backed hizzies that play the harlot o’ your ain side—made out o’ your ain flesh and blude? You a poet! True poetry, like true charity, my laddie, begins at hame. If ye’ll be a poet at a’, ye maun be a Cockney poet; and while the Cockneys be what they be, ye maun write, like Jeremiah of old, o’ lamentation and mourning and woe, for the sins o’ your people. Gin you want to learn the spirit o’ a people’s poet, down wi’ your Bible and read thae auld Hebrew prophets; gin ye wad learn the style, read your Burns frae morning till night; and gin ye’d learn the matter, just gang after your nose, and keep your eyes open, and ye’ll no miss it.’

‘But all this is so—so unpoetical.’

‘Hech! Is there no the heeven above them there, and the hell beneath them? and God frowning, and the deevil grinning? No poetry there! Is no the verra idea of the classic tragedy defined to be, man conquered by circumstance? Canna ye see it there? And the verra idea of the modern tragedy, man conquering circumstance?—and I’ll show you that, too—in mony a garret where no eye but the gude God’s enters, to see the patience, and the fortitude, and the self-sacrifice, and the luve stronger than death, that’s shining in thae dark places o’ the earth. Come wi’ me, and see.’

We went on through a back street or two, and then into a huge, miserable house, which, a hundred years ago, perhaps, had witnessed the luxury, and rung to the laughter of some one great fashionable family, alone there in their glory. Now every room of it held its family, or its group of families—a phalanstery of all the fiends;—its grand staircase, with the carved balustrades rotting and crumbling away piecemeal, converted into a common sewer for all its inmates. Up stair after stair we went, while wails of children, and curses of men, steamed out upon the hot stifling rush of air from every doorway, till, at the topmost story, we knocked at a garret door. We

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entered. Bare it was of furniture, comfortless, and freezing cold; but, with the exception of the plaster dropping from the roof, and the broken windows, patched with rags and paper, there was a scrupulous neatness about the whole, which contrasted strangely with the filth and slovenliness outside. There was no bed in the room—no table. On a broken chair by the chimney sat a miserable old woman, fancying that she was warming her hands over embers which had long been cold, shaking her head, and muttering to herself, with palsied lips, about the guardians and the workhouse; while upon a few rags on the floor lay a girl, ugly, small-pox marked, hollow-eyed, emaciated, her only bedclothes the skirt of a large handsome new riding-habit, at which two other girls, wan and tawdry, were stitching busily, as they sat right and left of her on the floor. The old woman took no notice of us as we entered: but one of the girls looked up, and, with a pleased gesture of recognition, put her finger up to her lips, and whispered, 'Ellen's asleep.'

'I'm not asleep, dears,' answered a faint unearthly voice; 'I was only praying. Is that Mr. Mackaye?'

'Ay, my lassies; but ha' ye gotten na fire the nicht?'

'No,' said one of them, bitterly, 'we've earned no fire to-night, by fair trade or foul either.'

The sick girl tried to raise herself up and speak, but was stopped by a frightful fit of coughing and expectoration, as painful, apparently, to the sufferer as it was, I confess, disgusting even to me.

I saw Mackaye slip something into the hand of one of the girls, and whisper, 'A half-hundred of coals'; to which she replied, with an eager look of gratitude that I never can forget, and hurried out. Then the sufferer, as if taking advantage of her absence, began to speak quickly and eagerly.

'Oh, Mr. Mackaye—dear, kind Mr. Mackaye—do speak to her; and do speak to poor Lizzy here! I'm not afraid to say it before her, because she's more gentle like, and hasn't learnt to say bad words yet—but do speak to them, and tell them not to go the bad way, like

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all the rest. Tell them it'll never prosper. I know it is want that drives them to it, as it drives all of us—but tell them it's best to starve and die honest girls, than to go about with the shame and the curse of God on their hearts, for the sake of keeping this poor, miserable, vile body together a few short years more in this world o' sorrow. Do tell them, Mr. Mackaye.'

'I'm thinking,' said he, with the tears running down his old withered face, 'ye'll mak' a better preacher at that text than I shall, Ellen.'

'Oh no, no ; who am I, to speak to them?—it's no merit o' mine, Mr. Mackaye, that the Lord's kept me pure through it all. I should have been just as bad as any of them, if the Lord had not kept me out of temptation in His great mercy, by making me the poor, ill-favoured creature I am. From that time I was burnt when I was a child, and had the small-pox afterwards, oh ! how sinful I was, and repined and rebelled against the Lord ! And now I see it was all His blessed mercy to keep me out of evil, pure and unspotted for my dear Jesus, when He comes to take me to Himself. I saw Him last night, Mr. Mackaye, as plain as I see you now, all in a flame of beautiful white fire, smiling at me so sweetly ; and He showed me the wounds in His hands and His feet, and He said, "Ellen, my own child, those that suffer with Me here, they shall be glorified with Me hereafter, for I'm coming very soon to take you home."'

Sandy shook his head at all this with a strange expression of face, as if he sympathised and yet disagreed, respected and yet smiled at the shape which her religious ideas had assumed ; and I remarked in the meantime that the poor girl's neck and arm were all scarred and distorted, apparently from the effects of a burn.

'Ah,' said Sandy, at length, 'I tauld ye ye were the better preacher of the two ; ye've mair comfort to gie Sandy than he has to gie the like o' ye. But how is the wound in your back the day ?'

Oh, it was wonderfully better ! the doctor had come and given her such blessed ease with a great thick leather

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he had put under it, and then she did not feel the boards through so much. 'But oh, Mr. Mackaye, I'm so afraid it will make me live longer to keep me away from my dear Saviour. And there's one thing, too, that's breaking my heart, and makes me long to die this very minute even if I didn't go to Heaven at all, Mr. Mackaye.' (And she burst out crying, and between her sobs it came out, as well as I could gather, that her notion was, that her illness was the cause of keeping the girls in "*the bad way*," as she called it.) 'For Lizzy here, I did hope that she had repented of it after all my talking to her; but since I've been so bad, and the girls have had to keep me most o' the time, she's gone out of nights just as bad as ever.'

Lizzy had hid her face in her hands the greater part of this speech. Now she looked up passionately, almost fiercely—

'Repent—I have repented—I repent of it every hour—I hate myself, and hate all the world because of it; but I must—I must—I cannot see her starve, and I cannot starve myself. When she first fell sick she kept on as long as she could, doing what she could, and then between us we only earned three shillings a week, and there was ever so much to take off for fire, and twopence for bread, and fivpence for candles; and then we were always getting fined, because they never gave us out the work till too late on purpose, and then they lowered prices again; and now Ellen can't work at all, and there's four of us with the old lady, to keep off two's work that couldn't keep themselves alone.'

'Doesn't the parish allow the old lady anything?' I ventured to ask.

'They used to allow half a crown for a bit; and the doctor ordered Ellen things from the parish, but it isn't half of 'em she ever got; and when the meat came, it was half times not fit to eat, and when it was her stomach turned against it. If she was a lady she'd be cockered up with all sorts of soups and jellies, and nice things, just the minute she fancied 'em, and lie on a water bed instead of

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the bare floor—and so she ought ; but where's the parish 'll do that ? And the hospital wouldn't take her in because she was incurable ; and besides, the old 'un wouldn't let her go—nor into the union neither. When she's in a good-humour like, she'll sit by her by the hour, holding her hand and kissing of it, and nursing of it, for all the world like a doll. But she won't hear of the workhouse ; so now, these last three weeks, they takes off all her pay, because they say she must go into the house, and not kill her daughter by keeping her out—as if they warn't a-killing her themselves.'

'No workhouse—no workhouse !' said the old woman, turning round suddenly, in a clear, lofty voice. 'No workhouse, sir, for an officer's daughter !'

And she relapsed into her stupor.

At that moment the other girl entered with the coals—but without staying to light the fire, ran up to Ellen with some trumpery dainty she had bought, and tried to persuade her to eat it.

'We have been telling Mr. Mackaye everything,' said poor Lizzy.

'A pleasant story, isn't it ? Oh ! if that fine lady, as we're making that riding-habit for, would just spare only half the money that goes to dressing her up to ride in the park, to send us out to the colonies, wouldn't I be an honest girl there ?—maybe an honest man's wife ! Oh, my God, wouldn't I slave my fingers to the bone to work for him ! Wouldn't I mend my life then ! I couldn't help it—it would be like getting into heaven out of hell. But now—we must—we must, I tell you. I shall go mad soon, I think, or take to drink. When I passed the gin-shop down there just now, I had to run like mad for fear I should go in ; and if I once took to that—Now then, to work again. Make up the fire, Mrs. . . . , please do.'

And she sat down, and began stitching frantically at the riding-habit, from which the other girl had hardly lifted her hands or eyes for a moment during our visit.

We made a motion as if to go.

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‘God bless you,’ said Ellen; ‘come again soon, dear Mr. Mackaye.’

‘Good-bye,’ said the elder girl; ‘and good-night to you. Night and day’s all the same here—we must have this home by seven o’clock to-morrow morning. My lady’s going to ride early, they say, whoever she may be, and we must just sit up all night. It’s often we haven’t had our clothes off for a week together, from four in the morning till two the next morning sometimes—stitch, stitch, stitch. Somebody’s wrote a song about that—I’ll learn to sing it—it’ll sound fitting-like up here.’

‘Better sing hymns,’ said Ellen.

‘Hymns for ?’ answered the other, and then burst out into that peculiar, wild, ringing, fiendish laugh—has my reader never heard it?

I pulled out the two or three shillings which I possessed, and tried to make the girls take them, for the sake of poor Ellen.

‘No; you’re a working man, and we won’t feed on you—you’ll want it some day—all the trade’s going the same way as we, as fast as ever it can!’

Sandy and I went down the stairs.

‘Poetic element? Yon lassie, rejoicing in her disfigurement and not her beauty—like the nuns of Peterborough in auld time—is there na poetry there? That puir lassie, dying on the bare boards, and seeing her Saviour in her dreams, is there na poetry there, callant? That auld body owre the fire, wi’ her “an officer’s dochter,” is there na poetry there? That ither, prostituting hersel’ to buy food for her freen—is there na poetry there?—tragedy—

‘With hues as when some mighty painter dips
His pen in dyes of earthquake and eclipse.

Ay, Shelley’s gran’; always gran’; but Fact is grander—God and Satan are grander. All around ye, in every gin-shop and costermonger’s cellar, are God and Satan at death grips; every garret is a haill Paradise Lost or Paradise Regained; and will ye think it beneath ye to be the “Peoples’ Poet”?’

CHAPTER IX

POETRY AND POETS

IN the history of individuals, as well as in that of nations, there is often a period of sudden blossoming—a short luxuriant summer, not without its tornadoes and thunder-glooms, in which all the buried seeds of past observation leap forth together into life, and form, and beauty. And such with me were the two years that followed. I thought—I talked poetry to myself all day long. I wrote nightly on my return from work. I am astonished, on looking back, at the variety and quantity of my productions during that short time. My subjects were intentionally and professedly Cockney ones. I had taken Mackaye at his word. I had made up my mind, that if I had any poetic power, I must do my duty therewith in that station of life to which it had pleased God to call me, and look at everything simply and faithfully as a London artisan. To this, I suppose, is to be attributed the little geniality and originality for which the public have kindly praised my verses—a geniality which sprung, not from the atmosphere whence I drew, but from the honesty and single-mindedness with which, I hope, I laboured. Not from the atmosphere, indeed,—that was ungenial enough; crime and poverty, all-devouring competition, and hopeless struggles against Mammon and Moloch, amid the roar of wheels, the ceaseless stream of pale, hard faces, intent on gain, or brooding over woe; amid endless prison walls of brick, beneath a lurid, crushing sky of smoke and mist. It was a dark,

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noisy, thunderous element that London life ; a troubled sea that cannot rest, casting up mire and dirt ; resonant of the clanking of chains, the grinding of remorseless machinery, the wail of lost spirits from the pit. And it did its work upon me ; it gave a gloomy colouring, a glare as of some Dantean 'Inferno,' to all my utterances. It did not excite me or make me fierce—I was too much inured to it—but it crushed and saddened me ; it deepened in me that peculiar melancholy of intellectual youth, which Mr. Carlyle has christened for ever by one of his immortal nicknames—'Werterism' ; I battered on my own melancholy. I believed, I loved to believe, that every face I passed bore the traces of discontent as deep as was my own—and was I so far wrong ? Was I so far wrong either in the gloomy tone of my own poetry ? Should not a London poet's work just now be to cry, like the Jew of old, about the walls of Jerusalem, 'Woe, woe to this city !' Is this a time to listen to the voices of singing men and singing women ? or to cry, 'Oh ! that my head were a fountain of tears, that I might weep for the sins of my people' ? Is it not noteworthy, also, that it is in this vein that the London poets have always been greatest ? Which of poor Hood's lyrics have an equal chance of immortality with 'The Song of the Shirt' and 'The Bridge of Sighs,' rising, as they do, right out of the depths of that Inferno, sublime from their very simplicity ? Which of Charles Mackay's lyrics can compare for a moment with the Æschylean grandeur, the terrible rhythmic lilt of his 'Cholera Chant'—

Dense on the stream the vapours lay,
Thick as wool on the cold highway ;
Spungy and dim each lonely lamp
Shone o'er the streets so dull and damp ;
The moonbeams could not pierce the cloud
That swathed the city like a shroud ;
There stood three shapes on the bridge alone,
Three figures by the coping-stone ;
Gaunt and tall and undefined,
Spectres built of mist and wind.

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I see his footmarks east and west—
I hear his tread in the silence fall—
He shall not sleep, he shall not rest—
He comes to aid us one and all.
Were men as wise as men might be,
They would not work for you, for me,
For him that cometh over the sea ;
But they will not hear the warning voice :
The Cholera comes,—Rejoice ! rejoice !
He shall be lord of the swarming town !
And mow them down, and mow them down !

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Not that I neglected, on the other hand, every means of extending the wanderings of my spirit into sunnier and more verdant pathways. If I had to tell the gay ones above of the gloom around me, I had also to go forth into the sunshine, to bring home if it were but a wild-flower garland to those that sit in darkness and the shadow of death. That was all that I could offer them. The reader shall judge, when he has read this book throughout, whether I did not at last find for them something better than even all the beauties of nature.

But it was on canvas, and not among realities, that I had to choose my garlands ; and therefore the picture galleries became more than ever my favourite—haunt, I was going to say ; but, alas ! it was not six times a year that I got access to them. Still, when once every May I found myself, by dint of a hard saved shilling, actually within the walls of that to me enchanted palace, the Royal Academy exhibition—Oh, ye rich ! who gaze round you at will upon your prints and pictures, if hunger is, as they say, a better sauce than any Ude invents, and fasting itself may become the handmaid of luxury, you should spend, as I did perforce, weeks and months shut out from every glimpse of Nature, if you would taste her beauties, even on canvas, with perfect relish and childish self-abandonment. How I loved and blessed those painters ! how I thanked Creswick for every transparent shade-chequered pool ; Fielding, for every rain-clad down ; Cooper, for every knot of quiet cattle beneath the cool grey willows ;

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Stanfield, for every snowy peak, and sheet of foam-fringed sapphire—each and every one of them a leaf out of the magic book which else was ever closed to me. Again, I say, how I loved and blessed those painters! On the other hand, I was not neglecting to read as well as to write poetry; and, to speak first of the highest, I know no book, always excepting Milton, which at once so quickened and exalted my poetical view of man and his history, as that great prose poem, the single epic of modern days, Thomas Carlyle's *French Revolution*. Of the general effect which his works had on me, I shall say nothing: it was the same as they have had, thank God, on thousands of my class and of every other. But that book above all first recalled me to the overwhelming and yet ennobling knowledge that there was such a thing as Duty; first taught me to see in history not the mere farce-tragedy of man's crimes and follies, but the dealings of a righteous Ruler of the universe, whose ways are in the great deep, and whom the sins and errors, as well as the virtues and discoveries of man, must obey and justify.

Then, in a happy day, I fell on Alfred Tennyson's poetry, and found there, astonished and delighted, the embodiment of thoughts about the earth around me which I had concealed, because I fancied them peculiar to myself. Why is it that the latest poet has generally the greatest influence over the minds of the young? Surely not for the mere charm of novelty? The reason is that he, living amid the same hopes, the same temptations, the same sphere of observation as they, gives utterance and outward form to the very questions which, vague and wordless, have been exercising their hearts. And what endeared Tennyson especially to me, the working man, was, as I afterwards discovered, the altogether democratic tendency of his poems. True, all great poets are by their office democrats; seers of man only as man; singers of the joys, the sorrows, the aspirations common to all humanity; but in Alfred Tennyson there is an element especially democratic,

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truly levelling ; not his political opinions, about which I know nothing, and care less, but his handling of the trivial everyday sights and sounds of nature. Brought up, as I understand, in a part of England which possesses not much of the picturesque, and nothing of that which the vulgar call sublime, he has learnt to see that in all nature, in the hedgerow and the sand-bank, as well as in the alp peak and the ocean waste, is a world of true sublimity,—a minute infinite,—an ever fertile garden of poetic images, the roots of which are in the unfathomable and the eternal, as truly as any phenomenon which astonishes and awes the eye. The descriptions of the desolate pools and creeks where the dying swan floated, the hint of the silvery marsh mosses by Mariana's moat, came to me like revelations. I always knew there was something beautiful, wonderful, sublime, in those flowery dykes of Battersea Fields ; in the long gravelly sweeps of that lone tidal shore ; and here was a man who had put them into words for me ! This is what I call democratic art—the revelation of the poetry which lies in common things. And surely all the age is tending in that direction : in Landseer and his dogs—in Fielding and his downs, with a host of noble fellow-artists—and in all authors who have really seized the nation's mind, from Crabbe and Burns and Wordsworth to Hood and Dickens, the great tide sets ever onward, outward, towards that which is common to the many, not that which is exclusive to the few—towards the likeness of Him who causes His rain to fall on the just and the unjust, and His sun to shine on the evil and the good ; who knoweth the cattle upon a thousand hills, and all the beasts of the field are in His sight.

Well—I must return to my story. And here some one may ask me, ' But did you not find this true spiritual democracy, this universal knowledge and sympathy, in Shakespeare above all other poets ? ' It may be my shame to have to confess it ; but though I find it now, I did not then. I do not think, however, my case is singular : from what I can ascertain, there is, even with regularly educated

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minds, a period of life at which that great writer is not appreciated, just on account of his very greatness ; on account of the deep and large experience which the true understanding of his plays requires—experience of man, of history, of art, and above all of those sorrows whereby, as Hezekiah says, and as I have learnt almost too well—‘whereby men live, and in all which is the life of the spirit.’ At seventeen, indeed, I had devoured Shakespeare, though merely for the food to my fancy which his plots and incidents supplied, for the gorgeous colouring of his scenery : but at the period of which I am now writing, I had exhausted that source of mere pleasure ; I was craving for more explicit and dogmatic teaching than any which he seemed to supply ; and for three years, strange as it may appear, I hardly ever looked into his pages. Under what circumstances I afterwards recurred to his exhaustless treasures my readers shall in due time be told.

So I worked away manfully with such tools and stock as I possessed, and of course produced, at first, like all young writers, some sufficiently servile imitations of my favourite poets.

‘Ugh!’ said Sandy, ‘wha wants mongrels atween Burns and Tennyson? A gude stock baith : but gin ye’d cross the breed ye maun unite the spirits, and no the manners, o’ the men. Why maun ilka one the noo steal his neebor’s barnacles, before he glints out o’ windows? Mak’ a style for yoursel’, laddie ; ye’re na mair Scots hind than ye are Lincolnshire laird : sae gang yer ain gate and leave them to gang theirs ; and just mak’ a gran’, brode, simple, Saxon style for yoursel’.’

‘But how can I, till I know what sort of a style it ought to be?’

‘Oh ! but yon’s amazing like Tom Sheridan’s answer to his father. “Tom,” says the auld man, “I’m thinking ye maun tak’ a wife.” “Verra weel, father,” says the pair skellum ; “and wha’s wife shall I tak’?” Wha’s style shall I tak’? say all the callants the noo. Mak’ a style as ye would mak’ a wife, by marrying her a’ to yoursel’ ; and ye’ll nae mair ken what’s your style till it’s made, than

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ye'll ken what your wife's like till she's been mony a year by your ingle.'

'My dear Mackaye,' I said, 'you have the most unmerciful way of raising difficulties, and then leaving poor fellows to lay the ghost for themselves.'

'Hech, then, I'm a'thegither a negative teacher, as they ca' it in the new lallans. I'll gang out o' my gate to tell a man his kye are laired, but I'm no obligated thereby to pu' them out for him. After a', nae man is rid o' a difficulty till he's conquered it single-handed for himsel': besides, I'm na poet, mair's the gude hap for you.'

'Why, then?'

'Och, och! they're puir, feckless, crabbit, unpractical bodies, thae poets; but if it's your doom, ye maun dree it; and I'm sair afeard ye ha' gotten the disease o' genius, mair's the pity, and maun write, I suppose, willy-nilly. Some folks' boodels are that made o' catgut, that they canna stir without chirruping and screeking.'

However, *aestro percitus*, I wrote on; and in about two years and a half had got together 'Songs of the Highways' enough to fill a small octavo volume, the circumstances of whose birth shall be given hereafter. Whether I ever attained to anything like an original style, readers must judge for themselves—the readers of the same volume I mean, for I have inserted none of those poems in this my autobiography; first, because it seems too like puffing my own works; and next, because I do not want to injure the as yet not over great sale of the same. But, if any one's curiosity is so far excited that he wishes to see what I have accomplished, the best advice which I can give him is, to go forth, and buy all the working men's poetry which has appeared during the last twenty years, without favour or exception; among which he must needs, of course, find mine, and also, I am happy to say, a great deal which is much better and more instructive than mine.

CHAPTER X

HOW FOLKS TURN CHARTISTS

THOSE who read my story only for amusement, I advise to skip this chapter. Those, on the other hand, who really wish to ascertain what working men actually do suffer—to see whether their political discontent has not its roots, not merely in fanciful ambition, but in misery and slavery most real and agonising—those in whose eyes the accounts of a system, or rather barbaric absence of all system, which involves starvation, nakedness, prostitution, and long imprisonment in dungeons worse than the cells of the Inquisition, will be invested with something at least of tragic interest, may, I hope, think it worth their while to learn how the clothes which they wear are made, and listen to a few occasional statistics, which, though they may seem to the wealthy mere lists of dull figures, are to the workmen symbols of terrible physical realities—of hunger, degradation, and despair.¹

Well : one day our employer died. He had been one of the old sort of fashionable West End tailors in the fast decreasing honourable trade ; keeping a modest shop, hardly to be distinguished from a dwelling-house, except by his name on the window-blinds. He paid good prices for work, though not as good, of course, as he had given twenty years before, and prided himself upon having all his work done at home. His workrooms, as I have said,

¹ Facts still worse than those which Mr. Locke's story contains have been made public by the *Morning Chronicle* in a series of noble letters on 'Labour and the Poor' ; which we entreat all Christian people to 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest.' 'That will be better for them,' as Mahomet, in similar cases, used to say.

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were no elysiums ; but still, as good, alas ! as those of three tailors out of four. He was proud, luxurious, foppish ; but he was honest and kindly enough, and did many a generous thing by men who had been long in his employ. At all events, his journeymen could live on what he paid them.

But his son, succeeding to the business, determined, like Rehoboam of old, to go ahead with the times. Fired with the great spirit of the nineteenth century—at least with that one which is vulgarly considered its especial glory—he resolved to make haste to be rich. His father had made money very slowly of late ; while dozens, who had begun business long after him, had now retired to luxurious ease and suburban villas. Why should he remain in the minority ? Why should he not get rich as fast as he could ? Why should he stick to the old, slow-going honourable trade ? Out of some four hundred and fifty West End tailors there were not one hundred left who were old-fashioned and stupid enough to go on keeping down their own profits by having all their work done at home and at first-hand. Ridiculous scruples ! The Government knew none such. Were not the army clothes, the post-office clothes, the policemen's clothes, furnished by contractors and sweaters, who hired the work at low prices, and let it out again to journeymen at still lower ones ? Why should he pay his men two shillings where the Government paid them one ? Were there not cheap houses even at the West End, which had saved several thousands a year merely by reducing their workmen's wages ? And if the workmen chose to take lower wages, he was not bound actually to make them a present of more than they asked for ? They would go to the cheapest market for anything they wanted, and so must he. Besides, wages had really been quite exorbitant. Half his men threw each of them as much money away in gin and beer yearly, as would pay two workmen at cheap house. Why was he to be robbing his family of comforts to pay for their extravagance ? And charging his customers, too, unnecessarily high prices—it was really robbing the public !

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Such, I suppose, were some of the arguments which led to an official announcement, one Saturday night, that our young employer intended to enlarge his establishment, for the purpose of commencing business in the 'show-trade'; and that, emulous of Messrs. Aaron, Levi, and the rest of that class, magnificent alterations were to take place in the premises, to make room for which our work-rooms were to be demolished, and that for that reason—for of course it was only for that reason—all work would in future be given out, to be made up at the men's own homes.

Our employer's arguments, if they were such as I suppose, were reasonable enough according to the present code of commercial morality. But, strange to say, the auditory, insensible to the delight with which the public would view the splendid architectural improvements—with taste too grovelling to appreciate the glories of plate-glass shop-fronts and brass scroll work—too selfish to rejoice, for its own sake, in the beauty of arabesques and chandeliers, which, though they never might behold, the astonished public would—with souls too niggardly to leap for joy at the thought that gents would henceforth buy the registered guanaco vest, and the patent elastic omni-seasonum paletôt half a crown cheaper than ever—or that needy noblemen would pay three pound ten instead of five pounds for their footmen's liveries—received the news, clod-hearted as they were, in sullen silence, and actually, when they got into the street, broke out into murmurs, perhaps into execrations.

'Silence!' said Crossthwaite; 'walls have ears. Come down to the nearest house of call, and talk it out like men, instead of grumbling in the street like fish-fags.'

So down we went. Crossthwaite, taking my arm, strode on in moody silence—once muttering to himself, bitterly—

'Oh yes; all right and natural! What can the little sharks do but follow the big ones?'

We took a room, and Crossthwaite coolly saw us all in; and locking the door, stood with his back against it.

'Now then, mind, "One and all," as the Cornishmen

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say, and no peaching. If any man is scoundrel enough to carry tales, I'll——'

'Do what?' asked Jemmy Downes, who had settled himself on the table, with a pipe and a pot of porter. 'You arn't the king of the Cannibal Islands, as I know of, to cut a cove's head off?'

'No; but if a poor man's prayer can bring God's curse down upon a traitor's head—it may stay on his rascally shoulders till it rots.'

'If ifs and ans were pots and pans. Look at Shechem Isaacs, that sold penknives in the street six months ago, now a-riding in his own carriage, all along of turning sweater. If God's curse is like that—I'll be happy to take any man's share of it.'

Some new idea seemed twinkling in the fellow's cunning bloated face as he spoke. I, and others also, shuddered at his words; but we all forgot them a moment afterwards, as Crossthwaite began to speak.

'We were all bound to expect this. Every working tailor must come to this at last, on the present system; and we are only lucky in having been spared so long. You all know where this will end—in the same misery as fifteen thousand out of twenty thousand of our class are enduring now. We shall become the slaves, often the bodily prisoners, of Jews, middlemen, and sweaters, who draw their livelihood out of our starvation. We shall have to face, as the rest have, ever-decreasing prices of labour, ever-increasing profits made out of that labour by the contractors who will employ us—arbitrary fines, inflicted at the caprice of hirelings—the competition of women, and children, and starving Irish—our hours of work will increase one-third, our actual pay decrease to less than one-half; and in all this we shall have no hope, no chance of improvement in wages, but ever more penury, slavery, misery, as we are pressed on by those who are sucked by fifties—almost by hundreds—yearly, out of the honourable trade in which we were brought up, into the infernal system of contract work, which is devouring our trade and many others, body and soul.

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Our wives will be forced to sit up night and day to help us—our children must labour from the cradle without chance of going to school, hardly of breathing the fresh air of heaven,—our boys, as they grow up, must turn beggars or paupers—our daughters, as thousands do, must eke out their miserable earnings by prostitution. And after all, a whole family will not gain what one of us had been doing, as yet, single-handed. You know there will be no hope for us. There is no use appealing to Government or Parliament. I don't want to talk politics here. I shall keep them for another place. But you can recollect as well as I can, when a deputation of us went up to a Member of Parliament—one that was reputed a philosopher, and a political economist, and a liberal—and set before him the ever-increasing penury and misery of our trade, and of those connected with it ; you recollect his answer—that, however glad he would be to help us, it was impossible—he could not alter the laws of nature—that wages were regulated by the amount of competition among the men themselves, and that it was no business of Government, or any one else, to interfere in contracts between the employer and employed, that those things regulated themselves by the laws of political economy, which it was madness and suicide to oppose. He may have been a wise man. I only know that he was a rich one. Every one speaks well of the bridge which carries him over. Every one fancies the laws which fill his pockets to be God's laws. But I say this, if neither Government nor Members of Parliament can help us, we must help ourselves. Help yourselves, and Heaven will help you. Combination among ourselves is the only chance. One thing we can do—sit still.'

'And starve !' said some one.

'Yes, and starve ! Better starve than sin. I say, it is a sin to give in to this system. It is a sin to add our weight to the crowd of artisans who are now choking and strangling each other to death, as the prisoners did in the Black Hole of Calcutta. Let those who will turn beasts of prey, and feed upon their fellows ; but let us at least keep

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ourselves pure. It may be the law of political civilisation, the law of nature, that the rich should eat up the poor, and the poor eat up each other. Then I here rise up and curse that law, that civilisation, that nature. Either I will destroy them, or they shall destroy me. As a slave, as an increased burden on my fellow-sufferers, I will not live. So help me God! I will take no work home to my house; and I call upon every one here to combine, and to sign a protest to that effect.'

'What's the use of that, my good Mr. Crossthwaite?' interrupted some one, querulously. 'Don't you know what came of the strike a few years ago, when this piece-work and sweating first came in? The masters made fine promises, and never kept 'em; and the men who stood out had their places filled up with poor devils who were glad enough to take the work at any price—just as ours will be. There's no use kicking against the pricks. All the rest have come to it, and so must we. We must live somehow, and half a loaf is better than no bread; and even that half loaf will go into other men's mouths, if we don't snap at it at once. Besides, we can't force others to strike. We may strike and starve ourselves, but what's the use of a dozen striking out of 20,000?'

'Will you sign the protest, gentlemen, or not?' asked Crossthwaite, in a determined voice.

Some half-dozen said they would if the others would.

'And the others won't. Well, after all, one man must take the responsibility, and I am that man. I will sign the protest by myself. I will sweep a crossing—I will turn cress-gatherer, rag-picker; I will starve piecemeal, and see my wife starve with me; but do the wrong thing I will not! The Cause wants martyrs. If I must be one, I must.'

All this while my mind had been undergoing a strange perturbation. The notion of escaping that infernal work-room, and the company I met there—of taking my work home, and thereby, as I hoped, gaining more time for study—at least, having my books on the spot ready at every odd moment, was most enticing. I had hailed the

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proposed change as a blessing to me, till I heard Cross-thwaite's arguments—not that I had not known the facts before ; but it had never struck me till then that it was a real sin against my class to make myself a party in the system by which they were allowing themselves (under temptation enough, God knows) to be enslaved. But now I looked with horror on the gulf of penury before me, into the vortex of which not only I, but my whole trade, seemed irresistibly sucked. I thought, with shame and remorse, of the few shillings which I had earned at various times by taking piecework home, to buy my candles for study. I whispered my doubts to Cross-thwaite, as he sat, pale and determined, watching the excited and querulous discussions among the other workmen.

‘What? So you expect to have time to read? Study after sixteen hours a day stitching? Study, when you cannot earn money enough to keep you from wasting and shrinking away day by day? Study, with your heart full of shame and indignation, fresh from daily insult and injustice? Study, with the black cloud of despair and penury in front of you? Little time, or heart, or strength, will you have to study, when you are making the same coats you make now, at half the price.’

I put my name down beneath Crossthwaite's, on the paper which he handed me, and went out with him.

‘Ay,’ he muttered to himself, ‘be slaves—what you are worthy to be, that you will be! You dare not combine—you dare not starve—you dare not die—and therefore you dare not be free! Oh! for six hundred men like Barbaroux's Marseillois—“who knew how to die!”’

‘Surely, Crossthwaite, if matters were properly represented to the Government, they would not, for their own existence' sake, to put conscience out of the question, allow such a system to continue growing.’

‘Government—Government? You a tailor, and not know that Government are the very authors of this system? Not to know that they first set the example, by getting the army and navy clothes made by contractors, and taking the lowest tenders? Not to know that the

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police clothes, the postmen's clothes, the convicts' clothes, are all contracted for on the same infernal plan, by sweaters, and sweaters' sweaters, and sweaters' sweaters' sweaters, till Government work is just the very last, lowest resource to which a poor starved-out wretch betakes himself to keep body and soul together? Why, the Government prices, in almost every department, are half, and less than half, the very lowest living price. I tell you, the careless iniquity of Government about these things will come out some day. It will be known, the whole abomination, and future generations will class it with the tyrannies of the Roman emperors and the Norman barons. Why, it's a fact, that the colonels of the regiments—noblemen, most of them—make their own vile profit out of us tailors—out of the pauperism of the men, the slavery of the children, the prostitution of the women. They get so much a uniform allowed them by Government to clothe the men with; and then—then, they let out the jobs to the contractors at less than half what Government give them, and pocket the difference. And then you talk of appealing to Government.'

'Upon my word,' I said, bitterly, 'we tailors seem to owe the army a double grudge. They not only keep under other artisans, but they help to starve us first, and then shoot us if we complain too loudly.'

'Oh, ho! your blood's getting up, is it? Then you're in the humour to be told what you have been hankering to know so long—where Mackaye and I go at night. We'll strike while the iron's hot, and go down to the Chartist meeting at . . .'

'Pardon me, my dear fellow,' I said. 'I cannot bear the thought of being mixed up in conspiracy—perhaps, in revolt and bloodshed. Not that I am afraid. Heaven knows I am not. But I am too much harassed, miserable, already. I see too much wretchedness around me, to lend my aid in increasing the sum of suffering, by a single atom, among rich and poor, even by righteous vengeance.'

'Conspiracy? Bloodshed? What has that to do with the Charter? It suits the venal Mammonite press well

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enough to jumble them together, and cry "Murder, rape, and robbery," whenever the six points are mentioned ; but they know, and any man of common sense ought to know, that the Charter is just as much an open political question as the Reform Bill, and ten times as much as Magna Charta was, when it got passed. What have the six points, right or wrong, to do with the question whether they can be obtained by moral force, and the pressure of opinion alone, or require what we call ulterior measures to get them carried ! Come along !'

So with him I went that night.

'Well, Alton ! where was the treason and murder ? Your nose must have been a sharp one, to smell out any there. Did you hear anything that astonished your weak mind so very exceedingly, after all ?'

'The only thing that did astonish me was to hear men of my own class—and lower still, perhaps some of them—speak with such fluency and eloquence. Such a fund of information—such excellent English—where did they get it all ?'

'From the God who knows nothing about ranks. They're the unknown great—the unaccredited heroes, as Master Thomas Carlyle would say—whom the flunkys aloft have not acknowledged yet—though they'll be forced to, some day, with a vengeance. Are you convinced, once for all ?'

'I really do not understand political questions, Crossthwaite.'

'Does it want so very much wisdom to understand the rights and the wrongs of all that ? Are the people represented ? Are you represented ? Do you feel like a man that's got any one to fight your battle in Parliament, my young friend, eh ?'

'I'm sure I don't know——'

'Why, what in the name of common sense—what interest or feeling of yours or mine, or any man's you ever spoke to, except the shopkeeper, do Alderman A—— or Lord C—— D—— represent ? They represent property

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—and we have none. They represent rank—we have none. Vested interests—we have none. Large capitals—those are just what crush us. Irresponsibility of employers, slavery of the employed, competition among masters, competition among workmen, that is the system they represent—they preach it, they glory in it.—Why, it is the very ogre that is eating us all up. They are chosen by the few, they represent the few, and they make laws for the many—and yet you don't know whether or not the people are represented !'

We were passing by the door of the Victoria Theatre ; it was just half-price time—and the beggary and rascality of London were pouring in to their low amusement, from the neighbouring gin-palaces and thieves' cellars. A herd of ragged boys, vomiting forth slang, filth, and blasphemy, pushed past us, compelling us to take good care of our pockets.

'Look there ! look at the amusements, the training, the civilisation, which the Government permits to the children of the people !—These licensed pits of darkness, traps of temptation, profligacy, and ruin, triumphantly yawning night after night—and then tell me that the people who see their children thus kidnapped into hell are represented by a Government who licenses such things !'

'Would a change in the franchise cure that ?'

'Household suffrage mightn't—but give us the Charter, and we'll see about it ! Give us the Charter, and we'll send workmen into Parliament that shall soon find out whether something better can't be put in the way of the ten thousand boys and girls in London who live by theft and prostitution, than the tender mercies of the Victoria—a pretty name ! They say the Queen's a good woman—and I don't doubt it. I wonder often if she knows what her precious namesake here is like.'

'But really, I cannot see how a mere change in representation can cure such things as that.'

'Why, didn't they tell us, before the Reform Bill, that extension of the suffrage was to cure everything ? And how can you have too much of a good thing ? We've

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only taken them at their word, we Chartists. Haven't all politicians been preaching for years that England's national greatness was all owing to her political institutions—to Magna Charta, and the Bill of Rights, and representative parliaments, and all that? It was but the other day I got hold of some Tory paper, that talked about the English constitution, and the balance of queen, lords, and commons, as the "Talismanic Palladium" of the country. 'Gad, we'll see if a move onward in the same line won't better the matter. If the balance of classes is such a blessed thing, the sooner we get the balance equal, the better; for it's rather lopsided just now, no one can deny. So, representative institutions are the talismanic palladium of the nation, are they? The palladium of the classes that have them, I daresay; and that's the very best reason why the classes that haven't got 'em should look out for the same palladium for themselves. What's sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose, isn't it? We'll try—we'll see whether the talisman they talk of has lost its power all of a sudden since '32—whether we can't rub the magic ring a little for ourselves and call up genii to help us out of the mire, as the shopkeepers and the gentlemen have done.'

From that night I was a Chartist, heart and soul—and so were a million and a half more of the best artisans in England—at least, I had no reason to be ashamed of my company. Yes; I too, like Crossthwaite, took the upper classes at their word; bowed down to the idol of political institutions, and pinned my hopes of salvation on 'the possession of one ten-thousandth part of a talker in the national palaver.' True, I desired the Charter, at first (as I do, indeed, at this moment), as a means to glorious ends—not only because it would give a chance of elevation, a free sphere of action, to lowly worth and talent; but because it was the path to reforms—social, legal, sanatory, educational—to which the veriest Tory—certainly not the great and good Lord Ashley—would not object. But soon, with me, and I am afraid with many, many more, the means became, by the frailty of poor human nature, an

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end, an idol in itself. I had so made up my mind that it was the only method of getting what I wanted, that I neglected, alas! but too often, to try the methods which lay already by me. 'If we had but the Charter'—was the excuse for a thousand lazinesses, procrastinations. 'If we had but the Charter'—I should be good, and free, and happy. Fool that I was! It was within, rather than without, that I needed reform.

And so I began to look on man (and too many of us, I am afraid, are doing so) as the creature and puppet of circumstances—of the particular outward system, social or political, in which he happens to find himself. An abominable heresy, no doubt; but, somehow, it appears to me just the same as Benthamites, and economists, and high-churchmen, too, for that matter, have been preaching for the last twenty years with great applause from their respective parties. One set informs the world that it is to be regenerated by cheap bread, free trade, and that peculiar form of the 'freedom of industry' which, in plain language, signifies 'the despotism of capital'; and which, whatever it means, is merely some outward system, circumstance, or 'dodge' *about* man, and not *in* him. Another party's nostrum is more churches, more schools, more clergymen—excellent things in their way—better even than cheap bread, or free trade, provided only that they are excellent—that the churches, schools, clergymen, are good ones. But the party of whom I am speaking seem to us workmen to consider the quality quite a secondary consideration, compared with the quantity. They expect the world to be regenerated, not by becoming more a Church—none would gladder help them in bringing that about than the Chartists themselves, paradoxical as it may seem—but by being dosed somewhat more with a certain 'Church system,' circumstance, or 'dodge.' For my part, I seem to have learnt that the only thing to regenerate the world is not more of any system, good or bad, but simply more of the Spirit of God.

About the supposed omnipotence of the Charter, I

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have found out my mistake. I believe no more in 'Morison's-Pill-remedies,' as Thomas Carlyle calls them. Talismans are worthless. The age of spirit-compelling spells, whether of parchment or carbuncle, is past—if, indeed, it ever existed. The Charter will no more make men good, than political economy, or the observance of the Church Calendar—a fact which we working men, I really believe, have, under the pressure of wholesome defeat and God-sent affliction, found out sooner than our more 'enlightened' fellow-idolaters. But at that time, as I have confessed already, we took our betters at their word, and believed in Morison's Pills. Only, as we looked at the world from among a class of facts somewhat different from theirs, we differed from them proportionably as to our notions of the proper ingredients in the said Pill.

But what became of our protest?

It was received—and disregarded. As for turning us off, we had, *de facto*, like Coriolanus, banished the Romans, turned our master off. All the other hands, some forty in number, submitted and took the yoke upon them, and went down into the house of bondage, knowing whither they went. Every man of them is now a beggar, compared with what he was then. Many are dead in the prime of life of consumption, bad food and lodging, and the peculiar diseases of our trade. Some have not been heard of lately—we fancy them imprisoned in some sweaters' dens—but thereby hangs a tale, whereof more hereafter.

But it was singular, that every one of the six who had merely professed their conditional readiness to sign the protest, were contumeliously discharged the next day, without any reason being assigned. It was evident that there had been a traitor at the meeting; and every one suspected Jemmy Downes, especially as he fell into the new system with suspiciously strange alacrity. But it was as impossible to prove the offence against him, as to punish him for it. Of that wretched man, too, and his

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subsequent career, I shall have somewhat to say hereafter. Verily, there is a God who judgeth the earth!

But now behold me and my now intimate and beloved friend, Crossthwaite, with nothing to do—a gentlemanlike occupation; but, unfortunately, in our class, involving starvation. What was to be done? We applied for work at several ‘honourable shops’; but at all we received the same answer. Their trade was decreasing—the public ran daily more and more to the cheap show-shops—and they themselves were forced, in order to compete with these latter, to put more and more of their work out at contract prices. *Facilis descensus Averni!* Having once been hustled out of the serried crowd of competing workmen, it was impossible to force our way in again. So, a week or ten days passed, our little stocks of money were exhausted. I was down-hearted at once; but Crossthwaite bore up gaily enough.

‘Katie and I can pick a crust together without snarling over it. And, thank God, I have no children, and never intend to have, if I can keep true to myself, till the good times come.’

‘Oh! Crossthwaite, are not children a blessing?’

‘Would they be a blessing to me now? No, my lad.—Let those bring slaves into the world who will! I will never beget children to swell the numbers of those who are trampling each other down in the struggle for daily bread, to minister in ever-deepening poverty and misery to the rich man’s luxury—perhaps his lust.’

‘Then you believe in the Malthusian doctrines?’

‘I believe them to be an infernal lie, Alton Locke; though good and wise people like Miss Martineau may sometimes be deluded into preaching them. I believe there’s room on English soil for twice the number there is now; and when we get the Charter we’ll prove it; we’ll show that God meant living human heads and hands to be blessings and not curses, tools and not burdens. But in such times as these, let those who have wives be as though they had none—as St. Paul said, when he told his people under the Roman Emperor to be above be-

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getting slaves and martyrs. A man of the people should keep himself as free from encumbrances as he can just now. He will find it all the more easy to dare and suffer for the people, when their turn comes——'

And he set his teeth firmly, almost savagely.

'I think I can earn a few shillings, now and then, by writing for a paper I know of. If that won't do, I must take up agitating for a trade, and live by spouting, as many a Tory member as well as Radical ones do. A man may do worse, for he may do nothing. At all events, my only chance now is to help on the Charter ; for the sooner it comes the better for me. And if I die—why, the little woman won't be long in coming after me, I know that well ; and there's a tough business got well over for both of us !'

'Hech,' said Sandy,

'To every man

Death comes but once a life —

as my countryman, Mr. Macaulay, says, in thae gran' Roman ballants o' his. But for ye, Alton, laddie, ye're owre young to start off in the People's Church Meelitant, sae just bide wi' me, and the barrel o' meal in the corner there winna waste, nae mair than it did wi' the widow o' Zareptha ; a tale which coincides sae weel wi' the everlasting righteousness, that I'm at times no inclined to consider it a'thegither mythical.'

But I, with thankfulness which vented itself through my eyes, finding my lips alone too narrow for it, refused to eat the bread of idleness.

'Aweel, then, ye'll just mind the shop, and dust the books whiles ; I'm getting auld and stiff, and ha' need o' help i' the business.'

'No,' I said ; 'you say so out of kindness ; but if you can afford no greater comforts than these, you cannot afford to keep me in addition to yourself.'

'Hech, then ! How do ye ken that the auld Scot eats a' he makes ? I was na born the spending side o' Tweed, my man. But gin ye daur, why dinna ye pack up your duds, and yer poems wi' them, and gang till your

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cousin i' the university? he'll surely put you in the way o' publishing them. He's bound to it by blude; and there's na shame in asking him to help you towards reaping the fruits o' yer ain labours. A few pund on a bond for repayment when the edition was sauld, noo,—I'd do that for mysel'; but I'm thinking ye'd better try to get a list o' subscribers. Dinna mind your independence; it's but spoiling the Egyptians, ye ken, and the bit ballants will be their money's worth, I'll warrant, and tell them a wheen facts they're no that weel acquentit wi'. Hech? Johnnie, my Chartist?'

'Why not go to my uncle?'

'Puir sugar-and-spice-selling bailie body! is there aught in his ledger about poetry, and the incommensurable value o' the products o' genius? Gang till the young scholar; he's a canny one, too, and he'll ken it to be worth his while to fash himsel' a wee anent it.'

So I packed up my little bundle, and lay awake all that night in a fever of expectation about the as yet unknown world of green fields and woods through which my road to Cambridge lay.

CHAPTER XI

‘THE YARD WHERE THE GENTLEMEN LIVE’

I MAY be forgiven, surely, if I run somewhat into detail about this my first visit to the country.

I had, as I have said before, literally never been farther afield than Fulham or Battersea Rise. One Sunday evening, indeed, I had got as far as Wandsworth Common; but it was March, and, to my extreme disappointment, the heath was not in flower.

But, usually, my Sundays had been spent entirely in study; which to me was rest, so worn out were both my body and my mind with the incessant drudgery of my trade, and the slender fare to which I restricted myself. Since I had lodged with Mackaye certainly my food had been better. I had not required to stint my appetite for money wherewith to buy candles, ink, and pens. My wages, too, had increased with my years, and altogether I found myself gaining in strength, though I had no notion how much I possessed till I set forth on this walk to Cambridge.

It was a glorious morning at the end of May; and when I escaped from the pall of smoke which hung over the city, I found the sky a sheet of cloudless blue. How I watched for the ending of the rows of houses, which lined the road for miles—the great roots of London, running far out into the country, up which poured past me an endless stream of food and merchandise and human beings—the sap of the huge metropolitan life-tree! How each turn of the road opened a fresh line of terraces or

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villas, till hope deferred made the heart sick, and the country seemed—like the place where the rainbow touches the ground, or the El Dorado of Raleigh's Guiana settler—always a little farther off! How between gaps in the houses, right and left, I caught tantalising glimpses of green fields, shut from me by dull lines of high-spiked palings! How I peeped through gates and over fences at trim lawns and gardens, and longed to stay, and admire, and speculate on the name of the strange plants and gaudy flowers; and then hurried on, always expecting to find something still finer ahead—something really worth stopping to look at—till the houses thickened again into a street, and I found myself, to my disappointment, in the midst of a town! And then more villas and palings; and then a village;—when would they stop, those endless houses?

At last they did stop. Gradually the people whom I passed began to look more and more rural, and more toil-worn and ill-fed. The houses ended, cattle-yards and farm-buildings appeared; and right and left, far away, spread the low rolling sheet of green meadows and corn-fields. Oh, the joy! The lawns with their high elms and firs, the green hedgerows, the delicate hue and scent of the fresh clover-fields, the steep clay banks where I stopped to pick nosegays of wild-flowers, and became again a child,—and then recollected my mother, and a walk with her on the river bank towards the Red House—and hurried on again, but could not be unhappy, while my eyes ranged free, for the first time in my life, over the chequered squares of cultivation, over glittering brooks, and hills quivering in the green haze, while above hung the skylarks, pouring out their souls in melody. And then, as the sun grew hot, and the larks dropped one by one into the growing corn, the new delight of the blessed silence! I listened to the stillness; for noise had been my native element; I had become in London quite unconscious of the ceaseless roar of the human sea, casting up mire and dirt. And now, for the first time in my life, the crushing confusing hubbub had flowed away, and left my brain calm and free. How I felt at that moment a

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capability of clear, bright meditation, which was as new to me as I believe it would have been to most Londoners in my position. I cannot help fancying that our unnatural atmosphere of excitement, physical as well as moral, is to blame for very much of the working man's restlessness and fierceness. As it was, I felt that every step forward, every breath of fresh air, gave me new life. I had gone fifteen miles before I recollected that, for the first time for many months, I had not coughed since I rose.

So on I went, down the broad bright road, which seemed to beckon me forward into the unknown expanses of human life.

The world was all before me, where to choose,

and I saw it both with my eyes and my imagination, in the temper of a boy broke loose from school. My heart kept holiday. I loved and blessed the birds which flitted past me, and the cows which lay dreaming on the sward. I recollect stopping with delight at a picturesque descent into the road, to watch a nursery-garden, full of roses of every shade, from brilliant yellow to darkest purple; and as I wondered at the innumerable variety of beauties which man's art had developed from a few poor and wild species, it seemed to me the most delightful life on earth, to follow in such a place the primæval trade of gardener Adam; to study the secrets of the flower-world, the laws of soil and climate: to create new species, and gloat over the living fruit of one's own science and perseverance. And then I recollected the tailor's shop, and the Charter, and the starvation, and the oppression which I had left behind, and ashamed of my own selfishness, went hurrying on again.

At last I came to a wood—the first real wood that I had ever seen; not a mere party of stately park trees growing out of smooth turf, but a real wild copse; tangled branches and grey stems fallen across each other; deep, ragged underwood of shrubs, and great ferns like princes' feathers, and gay beds of flowers, blue and pink and yellow, with butterflies flitting about them, and

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trailers that climbed and dangled from bough to bough—a poor, commonplace bit of copse, I dare say, in the world's eyes, but to me a fairy wilderness of beautiful forms, mysterious gleams and shadows teeming with manifold life. As I stood looking wistfully over the gate, alternately at the inviting vista of the green-embroidered path, and then at the grim notice over my head, 'All trespassers prosecuted,' a young man came up the ride, dressed in velveteen jacket and leather gaiters, sufficiently bedrabbled with mud. A fishing-rod and basket bespoke him some sort of destroyer, and I saw in a moment that he was 'a gentleman.' After all, there is such a thing as looking like a gentleman. There are men whose class no dirt or rags could hide, any more than they could Ulysses. I have seen such men in plenty among workmen, too; but, on the whole, the gentleman—by whom I do not mean just now the rich—have the superiority in that point. But not, please God, for ever. Give us the same air, water, exercise, education, good society, and you will see whether this 'haggardness,' this 'coarseness,' etc. etc., for the list is too long to specify, be an accident, or a property, of the man of the people.

'May I go into your wood?' asked I at a venture, curiosity conquering pride.

'Well! what do you want there, my good fellow?'

'To see what a wood is like—I never was in one in my life.'

'Humph! well—you may go in for that, and welcome. Never was in a wood in his life—poor devil!'

'Thank you!' quoth I. And I slowly clambered over the gate. He put his hand carelessly on the top rail, vaulted over it like a deer, and then turned to stare at me.

'Hullo! I say—I forgot—don't go far in, or ramble up and down, or you'll disturb the pheasants.'

I thanked him again for what license he had given me—went in, and lay down by the path-side.

Here, I suppose, by the rules of modern art, a picturesque description of the said wood should follow; but I am the most incompetent person in the world to write it.

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And, indeed, the whole scene was so novel to me, that I had no time to analyse ; I could only enjoy. I recollect lying on my face and fingering over the delicately cut leaves of the weeds, and wondering whether the people who lived in the country thought them as wonderful and beautiful as I did ;—and then I recollected the thousands whom I had left behind, who, like me, had never seen the green face of God’s earth ; and the answer of the poor gamin in St. Giles’s, who, when he was asked what the country was, answered, ‘*The yard where the gentlemen live when they go out of town*’—significant that, and pathetic ;—then I wondered whether the time would ever come when society would be far enough advanced to open to even such as he a glimpse, if it were only once a year, of the fresh, clean face of God’s earth ;—and then I became aware of a soft mysterious hum, above and around me, and turned on my back to look whence it proceeded, and saw the leaves gold—green and transparent in the sunlight, quivering against the deep heights of the empyrean blue ; and hanging in the sunbeams that pierced the foliage, a thousand insects, like specks of fire, that poised themselves motionless on thrilling wings and darted away, and returned to hang motionless again ;—and I wondered what they ate, and whether they thought about anything, and whether they enjoyed the sunlight ;—and then that brought back to me the times when I used to lie dreaming in my crib on summer mornings, and watched the flies dancing reels between me and the ceilings ;—and that again brought the thought of Susan and my mother ; and I prayed for them—not sadly—I could not be sad there ;—and prayed that we might all meet again some day and live happily together ; perhaps in the country, where I could write poems in peace ; and then, by degrees, my sentences and thoughts grew incoherent, and in happy, stupid animal comfort, I faded away into a heavy sleep, which lasted an hour or more, till I was awakened by the efforts of certain enterprising great black and red ants, who were trying to found a small Algeria in my left ear.

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I rose and left the wood, and a gate or two on, stopped again to look at the same sportsman fishing in a clear silver brook. I could not help admiring with a sort of childish wonder the graceful and practised aim with which he directed his tiny bait, and called up mysterious dimples on the surface, which in a moment increased to splashings and strugglings of a great fish, compelled, as if by some invisible spell, to follow the point of the bending rod till he lay panting on the bank. I confess, in spite of all my class prejudices against 'game-preserving aristocrats,' I almost envied the man; at least I seemed to understand a little of the universally attractive charms which those same outwardly contemptible field sports possess; the fresh air, fresh fields and copses, fresh running brooks, the exercise, the simple freedom, the excitement just sufficient to keep alive expectation and banish thought.—After all, his trout produced much the same mood in him as my turnpike-road did in me. And perhaps the man did not go fishing or shooting every day. The laws prevented him from shooting, at least, all the year round; so sometimes there might be something in which he made himself of use. An honest, jolly face too he had—not without thought and strength in it. 'Well, it is a strange world,' said I to myself, 'where those who can, need not; and those who cannot, must!'

Then he came close to the gate, and I left it just in time to see a little group arrive at it—a woman of his own rank, young, pretty, and simply dressed, with a little boy, decked out as a Highlander, on a shaggy Shetland pony, which his mother, as I guessed her to be, was leading. And then they all met, and the little fellow held up a basket of provisions to his father, who kissed him across the gate, and hung his creel of fish behind the saddle, and patted the mother's shoulder, as she looked up lovingly and laughingly in his face. Altogether, a joyous, genial bit of——Nature? Yes, Nature. Shall I grudge simple happiness to the few, because it is as yet, alas! impossible for the many.

And yet the whole scene contrasted so painfully with

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me—with my past, my future, my dreams, my wrongs, that I could not look at it ; and with a swelling heart I moved on—all the faster because I saw they were looking at me and talking of me, and the fair wife threw after me a wistful, pitying glance, which I was afraid might develop itself into some offer of food or money—a thing which I scorned and dreaded, because it involved the trouble of a refusal.

Then, as I walked on once more, my heart smote me. If they had wished to be kind, why had I grudged them the opportunity of a good deed? At all events, I might have asked their advice. In a natural and harmonious state, when society really means brotherhood, a man could go up to any stranger, to give and receive, if not succour, yet still experience and wisdom : and was I not bound to tell them what I knew? was sure that they did not know? was I not bound to preach the cause of my class wherever I went? Here were kindly people who, for aught I knew, would do right the moment they were told where it was wanted ; if there was an accursed artificial gulf between their class and mine, had I any right to complain of it, as long as I helped to keep it up by my false pride and surly reserve? No! I would speak my mind henceforth—I would testify of what I saw and knew of the wrongs, if not of the rights of the artisan, before whomsoever I might come. Oh! valiant conclusion of half an hour’s self-tormenting scruples! How I kept it, remains to be shown.

I really fear that I am getting somewhat trivial and prolix ; but there was hardly an incident in my two days’ tramp which did not give me some small fresh insight into the *terra incognita* of the country ; and there may be those among my readers, to whom it is not uninteresting to look, for once, at even the smallest objects with a cockney workman’s eyes.

Well, I trudged on—and the shadows lengthened, and I grew footsore and tired ; but every step was new, and won me forward with fresh excitement for my curiosity.

At one village I met a crowd of little, noisy, happy

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boys and girls pouring out of a smart new Gothic school-house. I could not resist the temptation of snatching a glance through the open door. I saw on the walls maps, music, charts, and pictures. How I envied those little urchins! A solemn, sturdy elder, in a white cravat, evidently the parson of the parish, was patting children's heads, taking down names, and laying down the law to a shrewd, prim young schoolmaster.

Presently, as I went up the village, the clergyman strode past me, brandishing a thick stick and humming a chant, and joined a motherly-looking wife, who, basket on arm, was popping in and out of the cottages, looking alternately serious and funny, cross and kindly—I suppose, according to the sayings and doings of the folks within.

'Come,' I thought, 'this looks like work at least.' And as I went out of the village, I accosted a labourer, who was trudging my way, fork on shoulder, and asked him if that was the parson and his wife?

I was surprised at the difficulty with which I got into conversation with the man; at his stupidity, feigned or real, I could not tell which; at the dogged, suspicious reserve with which he eyed me, and asked me whether I was 'one of they parts'? and whether I was a Londoner, and what I wanted on the tramp, and so on, before he seemed to think it safe to answer a single question. He seemed, like almost every labourer I ever met, to have something on his mind; to live in a state of perpetual fear and concealment. When, however, he found I was both a cockney and a passer-by, he began to grow more communicative, and told me, 'Ees—that were the parson sure enough.'

'And what sort of a man was he?'

'Oh! he was a main kind man to the poor; leastwise, in the matter of visiting 'em, and praying with 'em, and getting 'em to put into clubs, and such like; and his lady too. Not that there was any fault to find with the man about money—but 'twasn't to be expected of him.'

'Why, was he not rich?'

'Oh, rich enough to the likes of us. But his own

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tithes here arn’t more than a thirty pounds we hears tell ; and if he hadn’t summat of his own, he couldn’t do not nothing by the poor ; as it be, he pays for that ere school all to his own pocket, next part. All the rest o’ the tithes goes to some great lord or other—they say he draws a matter of a thousand a year out of the parish, and not a foot ever he sot into it ; and that’s the way with a main lot o’ parishes, up and down.’

This was quite a new fact to me. ‘And what sort or folks were the parsons all round.’

‘Oh, some of all sorts, good and bad. About six and half a dozen. There’s two or three nice young gentlemen com’d round here now, but they’re all what’s-’em-a-call it?—some sort o’ papishes ;—leastwise, they has prayers in the church every day, and doesn’t preach the Gospel, no how, I hears by my wife, and she knows all about it, along of going to meeting. Then there’s one over there-away, as had to leave his living—he knows why. He got safe over seas. If he had been a poor man, he’d been in * * * * gaol, safe enough, and soon enough. Then there’s two or three as goes a-hunting—not as I sees no harm in that ; if a man’s got plenty of money, he ought to enjoy himself, in course : but still he can’t be here and there too, to once. Then there’s two or three as is bad in their healths, or thinks themselves so—or else has livings summer’ else ; and they lives summer’ or others, and has curates. Main busy chaps is they curates, always, and wonderful hands to preach ; but then, just as they gets a little knowing like at it, and folks gets to like ’em, and run to hear ’em, off they pops to summat better ; and in course they’re right to do so ; and so we country-folks get nought but the young colts, afore they’re broke, you see.’

‘And what sort of a preacher was his parson?’

‘Oh, he preached very good Gospel, not that he went very often himself, acause he couldn’t make out the meaning of it ; he preached too high, like. But his wife said it was uncommon good Gospel ; and surely when he come to visit a body, and talked plain English, like, not

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sermon-ways, he was a very pleasant man to heer, and his lady uncommon kind to nurse folk. They sot up with me and my wife, they two did, two whole nights, when we was in the fever, afore the officer could get us a nurse.'

'Well,' said I, 'there are some good parsons left.'

'Oh yes; there's some very good ones—each one after his own way; and there'd be more on 'em, if they did but know how bad we labourers was off. Why, bless ye, I mind when they was very different. A new parson is a mighty change for the better, mostwise, we finds. Why, when I was a boy, we never had no schooling. And now mine goes and learns singing and jobrafy, and ciphering, and sich like. Not that I sees no good in it. We was a sight better off in the old times, when there weren't no schooling. Schooling harn't made wages rise, nor preaching neither.'

'But surely,' I said, 'all this religious knowledge ought to give you comfort, even if you are badly off.'

'Oh! religion's all very well for them as has time for it; and a very good thing—we ought all to mind our latter end. But I don't see how a man can hear sermons with an empty belly; and there's so much to fret a man, now, and he's so cruel tired coming home o' nights, he can't nowise go to pray a lot, as gentlefolks does.'

'But are you so ill off?'

'Oh! he'd had a good harvesting enough; but then he owed all that for he's rent; and he's club money wasn't paid up, nor he's shop. And then with he's wages'—(I forget the sum—under ten shillings)—'how could a man keep his mouth full, when he had five children? And then, folks is so unmarciful—I'll just tell you what they says to me, now, last time I was over at the board——'

And thereon he rambled off into a long jumble of medical-officers, and relieving-officers, and Farmer This, and Squire That, which indicated a mind as ill-educated as discontented. He cursed or rather grumbled at—for he had not spirit, it seemed, to curse anything—the New

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Poor Law ; because it ‘ ate up the poor, flesh and bone ; ’ —bemoaned the ‘ Old Law,’ when ‘ the Vestry was forced to give a man whatsomdever he axed for, and if they didn’t, he’d go to the magistrates and make ’em, and so sure as a man got a fresh child, he went and got another loaf allowed him next vestry, like a Christian ; ’—and so turned through a gate, and set to work forking up some weeds on a fallow, leaving me many new thoughts to digest.

That night I got to some town or other, and there found a night’s lodging, good enough for a walking traveller.

CHAPTER XII

CAMBRIDGE

WHEN I started again next morning, I found myself so stiff and footsore, that I could hardly put one leg before the other, much less walk upright. I was really quite in despair, before the end of the first mile ; for I had no money to pay for a lift on the coach, and I knew, besides, that they would not be passing that way for several hours to come. So, with aching back and knees, I made shift to limp along, bent almost double, and ended by sitting down for a couple of hours, and looking about me, in a country which would have seemed dreary enough, I suppose, to any one but a freshly-liberated captive, such as I was. At last I got up and limped on, stiffer than ever from my rest, when a gig drove past me towards Cambridge, drawn by a stout cob, and driven by a tall, fat, jolly-looking farmer, who stared at me as he passed, went on, looked back, slackened his pace, looked back again, and at last came to a dead stop, and hailed me in a broad nasal dialect—

‘Whor be ganging, then, boh?’

‘To Cambridge.’

‘Thew’st na git there that gate. Be’est thee honest man?’

‘I hope so,’ said I, somewhat indignantly.

‘What’s trade?’

‘A tailor,’ I said.

‘Tailor!—guide us! Tailor a-tramp? Barn’t accoostomed to tramp, then?’

Cambridge

‘I never was out of London before,’ said I, meekly—for I was too worn out to be cross—lengthy and impertinent as this cross-examination seemed.

‘Oi’ll gie thee lift; dee yow joomp in. Gae on, powney! Tailor, then! Oh! ah! tailor, saith he.’

I obeyed most thankfully, and sat crouched together, looking up out of the corner of my eyes at the huge tower of broadcloth by my side, and comparing the two red shoulders of mutton which held the reins, with my own wasted, white, woman-like fingers.

I found the old gentleman most inquisitive. He drew out of me all my story—questioned me about the way ‘Lunnon folks’ lived, and whether they got any shooting or ‘pattening’—whereby I found he meant skating—and broke in, every now and then, with ejaculations of childish wonder, and clumsy sympathy, on my accounts of London labour and London misery.

‘Oh, father, father!—I wonders they bears it. Us’n in the fens wouldn’t stand that likes. They’d roit, and roit, and roit, and tak’ oot the dook-gunes to un—they would, as they did five-and-twenty year ago. Never to goo ayond the housen!—never to go ayond the housen! Kill me in a three months, that would—bor’, then!’

‘Are you a farmer?’ I asked, at last, thinking that my turn for questioning was come.

‘I bean’t varmer; I be yooman born. Never paid rent in moy life, nor never wool. I farms my own land, and my vathers avore me, this ever so mony hoondred year. I’ve got the swoord of ’em to home, and the helmet that they fut with into the wars, then when they chopped off the king’s head—what was the name of um?’

‘Charles the First?’

‘Ees—that’s the booy. We was Parliament side—true Britons all we was, down into the fens, and Oliver Cromwell, as dug Botsham lode, to the head of us. Yow coom down to Metholl, and I’ll shaw ye a country. I’ll shaw ’ee some’at like bullocks to call, and some’at like a field o’ beans—I wool,—none o’ this here darned ups and downs o’ hills’ (though the country through which

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we drove was flat enough, I should have thought, to please any one), 'to shake a body's victuals out of his inwards—all so flat as a barn's floor, for vorty mile on end—there's the country to live in!—and vour sons—or was vour on 'em—every one on 'em fifteen stone in his shoes, to patten again' any man from Whit'sea Mere to Denver Sluice, for twenty pounds o' gold; and there's the money to lay down, and let the man as dare cover it, down with his money, and on wi' his pattens, thirteen-inch runners, down the wind, again' either a one o' the bairns!'

And he jingled in his pockets a heavy bag of gold, and winked, and chuckled, and then suddenly checking himself, repeated in a sad, dubious tone, two or three times, 'Vour on 'em there was—vour on 'em there was;' and relieved his feelings by springing the pony into a canter till he came to a public-house, where he pulled up, called for a pot of hot ale, and insisted on treating me. I assured him that I never drank fermented liquors.

'Aw? Eh? How can yow do that then? Die o' cowl i' the fen, that gate, yow would. Love ye then! they as dinnot tak' spirits down thor, tak' their pennord o' elevation, then—women-folk especial.'

'What's elevation?'

'Oh! ho! ho!—yow goo into druggist's shop o' market-day, into Cambridge, and you'll see the little boxes, doozens and doozens, a' ready on the counter; and never a ven-man's wife goo by, but what calls in for her pennord o' elevation, to last her out the week. Oh! ho! ho! Well, it keeps women-folk quiet, it do; and it's mortal good agin ago pains.'

'But what is it?'

'Opium, bor' alive, opium!'

'But doesn't it ruin their health? I should think it the very worst sort of drunkenness.'

'Ow, well, yow moi soy that—mak'th 'em cruel thin then, it do; but what can bodies do i' th' ago? Bot it's a bad thing, it is. Harken yow to me. Didst ever know one called Porter, to yowr trade?'

I thought a little, and recollected a man of that name,

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who had worked with us a year or two before—a great friend of a certain scatter-brained Irish lad, brother of Crossthwaite's wife.

‘Well, I did once, but I have lost sight of him twelve months, or more.’

The old man faced sharp round on me, swinging the little gig almost over, and then twisted himself back again, and put on a true farmer-like look of dogged, stolid reserve. We rolled on a few minutes in silence.

‘Dee yow consider, now, that a mon mought be lost, like, into Lunnon?’

‘How lost?’

‘Why, yow told o’ they sweaters—dee yow think a mon might get in wi’ one o’ they, and they that mought be looking for un not to vind un?’

‘I do, indeed. There was a friend of that man Porter got turned away from our shop, because he wouldn’t pay some tyrannical fine for being saucy, as they called it, to the shopman; and he went to a sweater’s—and then to another; and his friends have been tracking him up and down this six months, and can hear no news of him.’

‘Aw! guide us! And what’n, think yow, be gone wi’ un?’

‘I am afraid he has got into one of those dens, and has pawned his clothes, as dozens of them do, for food, and so can’t get out.’

‘Pawned his clothes for victuals! To think o’ that, noo! But if he had work, can’t he get victuals?’

‘Oh!’ I said, ‘there’s many a man who, after working seventeen or eighteen hours a day, Sundays and all, without even time to take off his clothes, finds himself brought in in debt to his tyrant at the week’s end. And if he gets no work, the villain won’t let him leave the house; he has to stay there starving, on the chance of an hour’s job. I tell you, I’ve known half a dozen men imprisoned in that way, in a little dungeon of a garret, where they had hardly room to stand upright, and only just space to sit and work between their beds, without breathing the fresh air, or seeing God’s sun, for months

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together, with no victuals but a few slices of bread and butter, and a little slop of tea, twice a day, till they were starved to the very bone.'

'Oh my God! my God!' said the old man in a voice which had a deeper tone of feeling than mere sympathy with others' sorrow was likely to have produced. There was evidently something behind all these inquiries of his. I longed to ask him if his name, too, was not Porter.

'Aw yow knawn Billy Porter? What was a like? Tell me, now—what was a like, in the Lord's name! what was a like unto?'

'Very tall and bony,' I answered.

'Ah! sax feet, and more? and a yard across?—but a was starved, a was a' thin, though, maybe, when yow sawn un?—and beautiful fine hair, hadn't a' like a lass's?'

'The man I knew had red hair,' quoth I.

'Ow, ay, an' that it wor, red as a rising sun, and the curls of un like gowlden guineas! And thou knew'st Billy Porter! To think o' that, noo.'—

Another long silence.

'Could you find un, dee yow think, noo, into Lunnon? Suppose now there was a mon 'ud gie—may be five pund—ten pund—twenty pund, by * * *—twenty pund down, for to ha' him brocht home safe and soun'—Could yow do't, bor'? I zay, could yow do't?'

'I could do it as well without the money as with, if I could do it at all. But have you no guess as to where he is?'

He shook his head sadly.

'We—that's to zay, they as wants un—haven't heerd tell of un vor this three year—three year coom Whitsun-tide as ever was——' And he wiped his eyes with his cuff.

'If you will tell me all about him, and where he was last heard of, I will do all I can to find him.'

'Will ye, noo? will ye? The Lord bless ye for zaying that.' And he grasped my hand in his great iron fist, and fairly burst out crying.

'Was he a relation of yours?' I asked gently.

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‘My bairn—my bairn—my eldest bairn. Dinnot yow ax me no moor—dinnot then, bor’. Gie on, yow powney, and yow goo leuk vor un.’

Another long silence.

‘I’ve a been to Lunnon, looking vor un.’

Another silence.

‘I went up and down, up and down, day and night, day and night, to all pot-houses as I could zee ; vor, says I, he was a’ways a main chap to drink, he was. Oh, deery me ! and I never cot zight on un—and noo I be most spent, I be.’—

And he pulled up at another public-house, and tried this time a glass of brandy. He stopped, I really think, at every inn between that place and Cambridge, and at each tried some fresh compound ; but his head seemed, from habit, utterly fire-proof.

At last, we neared Cambridge, and began to pass groups of gay horsemen, and then those strange caps and gowns—ugly and unmeaning remnant of obsolete fashion.

The old man insisted on driving me up to the gate of * * * College, and there dropped me, after I had given him my address, entreating me to ‘vind the bairn, and coom to zee him down to Metholl. But dinnot goo ax for Farmer Porter—they’s all Porters there away. Yow ax for Wooden-house Bob—that’s me ; and if I barn’t to home, ax for Mucky Billy—that’s my brawther—we’re all gotten our names down to ven ; and if he barn’t to home, yow ax for Froghall—that’s where my sister do live ; and they’ll all veed ye, and lodge ye, and welcome come. We be all like one, doon in the ven ; and do ye, do ye, vind my bairn !’ And he trundled on, down the narrow street.

I was soon directed, by various smart-looking servants, to my cousin’s rooms ; and after a few mistakes, and wandering up and down noble courts and cloisters, swarming with gay young men, whose jaunty air and dress seemed strangely out of keeping with the stern antique solemnity of the Gothic buildings around, I espied my cousin’s name over a door ; and, uncertain how he might

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receive me, I gave a gentle half-apologetic knock, which was answered by a loud 'Come in!' and I entered on a scene, even more incongruous than anything I had seen outside.

'If we can only keep away from Jesus as far as the corner, I don't care.'

'If we don't run into that first Trinity before the willows, I shall care with a vengeance.'

'If we don't it's a pity,' said my cousin. 'Wadham ran up by the side of that first Trinity yesterday, and he said that they were as well gruelled as so many posters, before they got to the stile.'

This unintelligible and to my inexperienced ears, irreverent conversation proceeded from half a dozen powerful young men, in low-crowned sailors' hats and flannel trousers, some in striped jerseys, some in shooting-jackets, some smoking cigars, some beating up eggs in sherry; while my cousin, dressed like 'a fancy waterman,' sat on the back of a sofa, puffing away at a huge meer-schaum.

'Alton! why, what wind on earth has blown you here?'

By the tone, the words seemed rather an inquiry as to what wind would be kind enough to blow me back again. But he recovered his self-possession in a moment.

'Delighted to see you! Where's your portmanteau? Oh—left it at the Bull! Ah, I see. Very well, we'll send the gyp for it in a minute, and order some luncheon. We're just going down to the boat-race. Sorry I can't stop, but we shall all be fined—not a moment to lose. I'll send you in luncheon as I go through the butteries; then, perhaps, you'd like to come down and see the race. Ask the gyp to tell you the way. Now, then, follow your noble captain, gentlemen—to glory and a supper.' And he bustled out with his crew.

While I was staring about the room, at the jumble of Greek books, boxing-gloves, and luscious prints of pretty women, a shrewd-faced, smart man entered, much better dressed than myself.

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‘What would you like, sir? Ox-tail soup, sir, or gravy-soup, sir? Stilton cheese, sir, or Cheshire, sir? Old Stilton, sir, just now.’

Fearing lest many words might betray my rank—and strange to say, though I should not have been afraid of confessing myself an artisan before the ‘gentlemen’ who had just left the room, I was ashamed to have my low estate discovered, and talked over with his compeers, by the flunkey who waited on them—I answered, ‘Anything—I really don’t care,’ in as aristocratic and offhand a tone as I could assume.

‘Porter or ale, sir?’

‘Water,’ without a ‘thank you,’ I am ashamed to say, for I was not at that time quite sure whether it was well-bred to be civil to servants.

The man vanished, and reappeared with a savoury luncheon, silver forks, snowy napkins, smart plates—I felt really quite a gentleman.

He gave me full directions as to my ‘way to the boat, sir’; and I started out much refreshed; passed through back streets, dingy, dirty, and profligate-looking enough; out upon wide meadows, fringed with enormous elms; across a ferry; through a pleasant village, with its old grey church and spire; by the side of a sluggish river, alive with wherries. I had walked down some mile or so, and just as I heard a cannon, as I thought, fire at some distance, and wondered at its meaning, I came to a sudden bend of the river, with a church-tower hanging over the stream on the opposite bank, a knot of tall poplars, weeping willows, rich lawns, sloping down to the water’s side, gay with bonnets and shawls; while, along the edge of the stream, light, gaudily-painted boats apparently waited for the race,—altogether the most brilliant and graceful group of scenery which I had beheld in my little travels. I stopped to gaze; and among the ladies on the lawn opposite, caught sight of a figure—my heart leapt into my mouth! Was it she at last? It was too far to distinguish features; the dress was altogether different—but was it not she? I saw her move across the lawn, and take the

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arm of a tall, venerable-looking man ; and his dress was the same as that of the dean, at the Dulwich Gallery—was it? was it not? To have found her and a river between us! It was ludicrously miserable—miserably ludicrous. Oh, that accursed river, which debarred me from certainty, from bliss! I would have plunged across—but there were three objections—first that I could not swim ; next, what could I do when I had crossed ; and thirdly, it might not be she after all.

And yet I was certain—instinctively certain—that it was she, the idol of my imagination for years. If I could not see her features under that little white bonnet, I could imagine them there ; they flashed up in my memory as fresh as ever. Did she remember my features, as I did hers? Would she know me again? Had she ever even thought of me, from that day to this? Fool! But there I stood, fascinated, gazing across the river, heedless of the racing-boats, and the crowd, and the roar that was rushing up to me at the rate of ten miles an hour, and in a moment more, had caught me, and swept me away with it, whether I would or not, along the towing-path, by the side of the foremost boats.

And yet, after a few moments, I ceased to wonder either at the Cambridge passion for boat-racing, or at the excitement of the spectators. '*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*' It was a noble sport—a sight such as could only be seen in England—some hundred of young men, who might, if they had chosen, been lounging effeminately about the streets, subjecting themselves voluntarily to that intense exertion, for the mere pleasure of toil. The true English stuff came out there ; I felt that, in spite of all my prejudices—the stuff which has held Gibraltar and conquered at Waterloo—which has created a Birmingham and a Manchester, and colonised every quarter of the globe—that grim, earnest, stubborn energy, which, since the days of the old Romans, the English possess alone of all the nations of the earth. I was as proud of the gallant young fellows as if they had been my brothers—of their courage and endurance (for one could see that it was no child's-

Cambridge

play, from the pale faces, and panting lips), their strength and activity, so fierce and yet so cultivated, smooth, harmonious, as oar kept time with oar, and every back rose and fell in concert—and felt my soul stirred up to a sort of sweet madness, not merely by the shouts and cheers of the mob around me, but by the loud fierce pulse of the rowlocks, the swift whispering rush of the long snake-like eight oars, the swirl and gurgle of the water in their wake, the grim, breathless silence of the straining rowers. My blood boiled over, and fierce tears swelled into my eyes; for I, too, was a man, and an Englishman; and when I caught sight of my cousin, pulling stroke to the second boat in the long line, with set teeth and flashing eyes, the great muscles on his bare arms springing up into knots at every rapid stroke, I ran and shouted among the maddest and the foremost.

But I soon tired, and footsore as I was, began to find my strength fail me. I tried to drop behind, but found it impossible in the press. At last, quite out of breath, I stopped; and instantly received a heavy blow from behind, which threw me on my face; and a fierce voice shouted in my ear, ‘Confound you, sir! don’t you know better than to do that?’ I looked up, and saw a man twice as big as myself sprawling over me, headlong down the bank, toward the river, whither I followed him, but alas! not on my feet, but rolling head over heels. On the very brink he stuck his heels into the turf, and stopped dead, amid a shout of, ‘Well saved, Lynedale!’ I did not stop; but rolled into some two-feet water, amid the laughter and shouts of the men.

I scrambled out, and limped on, shaking with wet and pain, till I was stopped by a crowd which filled the towing-path. An eight-oar lay under the bank, and the men on shore were cheering and praising those in the boat for having ‘bumped,’ which word I already understood to mean, winning a race.

Among them, close to me, was the tall man who had upset me; and a very handsome, high-bred-looking man he was. I tried to slip by, but he recognised me instantly, and spoke.

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‘I hope I didn’t hurt you much. Really, when I spoke so sharply, I did not see that you were not a gownsman!’

The speech, as I suppose now, was meant courteously enough. It indicated that though he might allow himself liberties with men of his own class, he was too well bred to do so with me. But in my anger I saw nothing but the words, ‘not a gownsman.’ Why should he see that I was not a gownsman? Because I was shabbier? —(and my clothes, over and above the ducking they had had, were shabby); or more plebeian in appearance (whatsoever that may mean)? or wanted something else, which the rest had about them, and I had not? Why should he know that I was not a gownsman? I did not wish, of course, to be a gentleman, and an aristocrat; but I was nettled, nevertheless, at not being mistaken for one; and answered, sharply enough—

‘No matter whether I am hurt or not. It serves me right for getting among you cursed aristocrats.’

‘Box the cad’s ears, Lord Lynedale,’ said a dirty fellow with a long pole—a cad himself, I should have thought.

‘Let him go home and ask his mammy to hang him out to dry,’ said another.

The lord (for so I understood he was) looked at me with an air of surprise and amusement, which may have been good-natured enough in him, but did not increase the good-nature in me.

‘Tut, tut, my good fellow. I really am very sorry for having upset you. Here’s half a crown to cover damages.’

‘Better give it me than a muff like that,’ quoth he of the long pole; while I answered, surlily enough, that I wanted neither him nor his money, and burst through the crowd toward Cambridge. I was so shabby and plebeian, then, that people actually dare offer me money! Intolerable!

The reader may say that I was in a very unwholesome and unreasonable frame of mind.

So I was. And so would he have been in my place.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LOST IDOL FOUND

ON my return, I found my cousin already at home, in high spirits at having, as he informed me, 'bumped the first Trinity.' I excused myself for my dripping state, simply by saying that I had slipped into the river. To tell him the whole of the story, while the fancied insult still rankled fresh in me, was really too disagreeable both to my memory and my pride.

Then came the question, 'What had brought me to Cambridge?' I told him all, and he seemed honestly to sympathise with my misfortunes.

'Never mind; we'll make it all right somehow. Those poems of yours—you must let me have them and look over them; and I dare say I shall persuade the governor to do something with them. After all, it's no loss for you; you couldn't have got on tailoring—much too sharp a fellow for that;—you ought to be at college, if one could only get you there. These sizarships, now, were meant for—just such cases as yours—clever fellows who could not afford to educate themselves; if we could only help you to one of them, now——'

'You forget that in that case,' said I, with something like a sigh, 'I should have to become a member of the Church of England.'

'Why, no; not exactly. Though, of course, if you want to get all out of the university which you ought to get, you must do so at last.'

'And pretend to believe what I do not; for the sake

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of deserting my own class, and pandering to the very aristocrats, whom——’

‘Hullo!’ and he jumped with a hoarse laugh. ‘Stop that till I see whether the door is sported. Why, you silly fellow, what harm have the aristocrats, as you call them, ever done you? Are they not doing you good at this moment? Are you not, by virtue of their aristocratic institutions, nearer having your poems published, your genius recognised, etc. etc., than ever you were before?’

‘Aristocrats? Then you call yourself one?’

‘No, Alton, my boy; not yet,’ said he quietly and knowingly. ‘Not yet: but I have chosen the right road, and shall end at the road’s end; and I advise you—for really as my cousin, I wish you all success, even for the mere credit of the family, to choose the same road likewise.’

‘What road?’

‘Come up to Cambridge, by hook or by crook, and then take orders.’

I laughed scornfully.

‘My good cousin, it is the only method yet discovered for turning a snob (as I am, or was) into a gentleman; except putting him into a heavy cavalry regiment. My brother, who has no brains, preferred the latter method. I, who flatter myself that I have some, have taken the former.’ The thought was new and astonishing to me, and I looked at him in silence while he ran on—

‘If you are once a parson, all is safe. Be you who you may before, from that moment you are a gentleman. No one will offer an insult. You are good enough for any man’s society. You can dine at any nobleman’s table. You can be friend, confidant, father confessor, if you like, to the highest women in the land; and if you have person, manners, and common sense, marry one of them into the bargain, Alton, my boy.’

‘And it is for that that you will sell your soul—to become a hanger-on of the upper classes, in sloth and luxury?’

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‘Sloth and luxury? Stuff and nonsense! I tell you that after I have taken orders, I shall have years and years of hard work before me; continual drudgery of serving tables, managing charities, visiting, preaching, from morning till night, and after that often from night to morning again. Enough to wear out any but a tough constitution, as I trust mine is. Work, Alton, and hard work, is the only way nowadays to rise in the Church, as in other professions. My father can buy me a living some day: but he can’t buy me success, notoriety, social position, power——’ and he stopped suddenly, as if he had been on the point of saying something more which should not have been said.

‘And this,’ I said, ‘is your idea of a vocation for the sacred ministry? It is for this, that you, brought up a dissenter, have gone over to the Church of England.’

‘And how do you know’—and his whole tone of voice changed instantly into what was meant, I suppose, for a gentle seriousness and reverent sauvity—‘that I am not a sincere member of the Church of England? How do you know that I may not have loftier plans and ideas, though I may not choose to parade them to every one, and give that which is holy to the dogs?’

‘I am the dog, then?’ I asked, half amused; for I was too curious about his state of mind to be angry.

‘Not at all, my dear fellow. But those great men to whom we (or at least I) owe our conversion to the true Church, always tell us (and you will feel yourself how right they are) not to parade religious feelings; to look upon them as sacred things, to be treated with that due reserve which springs from real reverence. You know, as well as I, whether that is the fashion of the body in which we were, alas! brought up. You know, as well as I, whether the religious conversation of that body has heightened your respect for sacred things.’

‘I do, too well.’ And I thought of Mr. Wigginton and my mother’s tea-parties.

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‘I daresay the vulgarity of that school has, ere now, shaken your faith in all that was holy?’

I was very near confessing that it had : but a feeling came over me, I knew not why, that my cousin would have been glad to get me into his power, and would therefore have welcomed a confession of infidelity. So I held my tongue.

‘I can confess,’ he said, in the most confidential tone, ‘that it had for a time that effect on me. I have confessed it, ere now, and shall again and again, I trust. But I shudder to think of what I might have been believing or disbelieving now, if I had not in a happy hour fallen in with Mr. Newman’s sermons, and learnt from them, and from his disciples, what the Church of England really was ; not Protestant, no ; but Catholic in the deepest and highest sense.’

‘So you are one of these new Tractarians ? You do not seem to have adopted yet the ascetic mode of life, which I hear they praise up so highly.’

‘My dear Alton, if you have read, as you have, your Bible, you will recollect a text which tells you not to appear to men to fast. What I do or do not do in the way of self-denial, unless I were actually profligate, which I give you my sacred honour I am not, must be a matter between Heaven and myself.’

There was no denying that truth ; but the longer my cousin talked the less I trusted in him—I had almost said, the less I believed him. Ever since the tone of his voice had changed so suddenly, I liked him less than when he was honestly blurting out his coarse and selfish ambition. I do not think he was a hypocrite. I think he believed what he said, as strongly as he could believe anything. He proved afterwards that he did so, as far as man can judge man, by severe and diligent parish work : but I cannot help doubting at times, if that man ever knew what believing meant. God forgive him ! In that, he is no worse than hundreds more who have never felt the burning and shining flame of intense conviction, of some truth rooted in the inmost recesses of the soul, by

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which a man must live, for which he would not fear to die.

And therefore I listened to him dully and carelessly ; I did not care to bring objections, which arose thick and fast, to everything he said. He tried to assure me—and did so with a great deal of cleverness—that this Tractarian movement was not really an aristocratic, but a democratic one ; that the Catholic Church had been in all ages the Church of the poor ; that the clergy were commissioned by Heaven to vindicate the rights of the people, and to stand between them and the tyranny of Mammon. I did not care to answer him that the ‘Catholic Church’ had always been a Church of slaves, and not of free men ; that the clergy had in every age been the enemies of light, of liberty ; the oppressors of their flocks ; and that to exalt a sacerdotal caste over other aristocracies, whether of birth or wealth, was merely to change our tyrants. When he told me that a clergyman of the Established Church, if he took up the cause of the working classes, might be the boldest and surest of all allies, just because, being established, and certain of his income, he cared not one sixpence what he said to any man alive, I did not care to answer him, as I might—And more shame upon the clergy that, having the safe vantage-ground which you describe, they dare not use it like men in a good cause, and speak their minds, if forsooth no one can stop them from so doing. In fact, I was distrustful, which I had a right to be, and envious also ; but if I had a right to be that, I was certainly not wise, nor is any man, in exercising the said dangerous right as I did, and envying my cousin and every man in Cambridge.

But that evening, understanding that a boating supper or some jubilation over my cousin’s victory, was to take place in his rooms, I asked leave to absent myself—and I do not think my cousin felt much regret at giving me leave—and wandered up and down the King’s Parade, watching the tall gables of King’s College Chapel, and the classic front of the Senate House, and the stately tower of St. Mary’s, as they stood, stern and silent, bathed in the

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still glory of the moonlight, and contrasting bitterly the lot of those who were educated under their shadow to the lot which had befallen me.¹

‘Noble buildings!’ I said to myself, ‘and noble institutions! given freely to the people, by those who loved the people, and the Saviour who died for them. They gave us what they had, those mediæval founders: whatsoever narrowness of mind or superstition defiled their gift was not their fault, but the fault of their whole age. The best they knew they imparted freely, and God will reward them for it. To monopolise those institutions for the rich, as is done now, is to violate both the spirit and the letter of the foundations; to restrict their studies to the limits of middle-aged Romanism, their conditions of admission to those fixed at the Reformation, is but a shade less wrongful. The letter is kept—the spirit is thrown away. You refuse to admit any who are not members of the Church of England, say, rather, any who will not sign the dogmas of the Church of England, whether they believe a word of them or not. Useless formalism! which lets through the reckless, the profligate, the ignorant, the hypocritical: and only excludes the honest and the conscientious, and the mass of the intellectual working men. And whose fault is it that THEY are not members of the Church of England? Whose fault is it, I ask? Your predecessors neglected the lower orders, till they have ceased to reverence either you or your doctrines, you confess that, among yourselves, freely enough. You throw the blame of the present widespread dislike to the Church of England on her sins during ‘the godless eighteenth century.’ Be it so. Why are those sins to be visited on us? Why are we to be shut out from the universities, which were founded for us, because you have let us grow up, by millions, heathens and infidels, as you call us? Take away your subterfuge! It is not merely because we are bad churchmen that you exclude us,

¹ It must be remembered that these impressions of, and comments on the universities, are not my own. They are simply what clever working men thought about them from 1845 to 1850; a period at which I had the fullest opportunities for knowing the thoughts of working men.

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else you would be crowding your colleges, now, with the talented poor of the agricultural districts, who, as you say, remain faithful to the church of their fathers. But are there six labourers' sons educating in the universities at this moment? No! the real reason for our exclusion, churchmen or not, is, because we are *poor*—because we cannot pay your exorbitant fees, often, as in the case of bachelors of arts, exacted for tuition which is never given, and residence which is not permitted—because we could not support the extravagance which you not only permit, but encourage—because by your own unblushing confession, it ensures the university “the support of the aristocracy.”’

‘But, on religious points, at least, you must abide by the statutes of the university.’

Strange argument, truly, to be urged literally by English Protestants in possession of Roman Catholic bequests! If that be true in the letter, as well as in the spirit, you should have given place long ago to the Dominicans and the Franciscans. In the spirit it is true, and the Reformers acted on it when they rightly converted the universities to the uses of the new faith. They carried out the spirit of the founders' statutes by making the universities as good as they could be, and letting them share in the new light of the Elizabethan age. But was the sum of knowledge, human and divine, perfected at the Reformation? Who gave the Reformers, or you, who call yourselves their representatives, a right to say to the mind of man, and to the teaching of God's Spirit, ‘Hitherto, and no farther’? Society and mankind, the children of the Supreme, will not stop growing for your dogmas—much less for your vested interests; and the righteous law of mingled development and renovation, applied in the sixteenth century, must be reapplied in the nineteenth; while the spirits of the founders, now purged from the superstitions and ignorances of their age, shall smile from heaven, and say, ‘So would we have had it, if we had lived in the great nineteenth century, into which it has been your privilege to be born.’

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But such thoughts soon passed away. The image which I had seen that afternoon upon the river banks had awakened imperiously the frantic longings of past years; and now it reascended its ancient throne, and tyrannously drove forth every other object, to keep me alone with its own tantalising and torturing beauty. I did not think about her—No; I only stupidly and steadfastly stared at her with my whole soul and imagination, through that long sleepless night; and, in spite of the fatigue of my journey, and the stiffness proceeding from my fall and wetting, I lay tossing till the early sun poured into my bedroom window. Then I arose, dressed myself, and went out to wander up and down the streets, gazing at one splendid building after another, till I found the gates of King's College open. I entered eagerly, through a porch which, to my untutored taste, seemed gorgeous enough to form the entrance to a fairy palace, and stood in the quadrangle, riveted to the spot by the magnificence of the huge chapel on the right.

If I had admired it the night before, I felt inclined to worship it this morning, as I saw the lofty buttresses and spires, fretted with all their gorgeous carving, and 'storied windows richly dight,' sleeping in the glare of the newly-risen sun, and throwing their long shadows due westward down the sloping lawn, and across the river which dimpled and gleamed below, till it was lost among the towering masses of crisp elms and rose-garlanded chestnuts in the rich gardens beyond.

Was I delighted? Yes—and yet no. There is a painful feeling in seeing anything magnificent which one cannot understand. And perhaps it was a morbid sensitiveness, but the feeling was strong upon me that I was an interloper there—out of harmony with the scene and the system which had created it; that I might be an object of unpleasant curiosity, perhaps of scorn (for I had not forgotten the nobleman at the boat-race), amid those monuments of learned luxury. Perhaps, on the other hand, it was only from the instinct which makes us seek for solitude under the pressure of intense emotions, when

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we have neither language to express them to ourselves, nor loved one in whose silent eyes we may read kindred feelings—a sympathy which wants no words. Whatever the cause was, when a party of men, in their caps and gowns, approached me down the dark avenue which led into the country, I was glad to shrink for concealment behind the weeping-willow at the foot of the bridge, and slink off unobserved to breakfast with my cousin.

We had just finished breakfast, my cousin was lighting his meerschaum, when a tall figure passed the window, and the taller of the noblemen, whom I had seen at the boat-race, entered the room with a packet of papers in his hand.

‘Here, Locule mi! my pocket-book—or rather, to stretch a bad pun till it bursts, my pocket-dictionary—I require the aid of your benevolently-squandered talents for the correction of these proofs. I am, as usual, both idle and busy this morning; so draw pen, and set to work for me.’

‘I am exceedingly sorry, my lord,’ answered George, in his most obsequious tone, ‘but I must work this morning with all my might. Last night, recollect, was given to triumph, Bacchus, and idleness.’

‘Then find some one who will do them for me, my Ulysses polumechane, polutrope, panurge.’

‘I shall be most happy (with a half-frown and a wince) to play Panurge to your lordship’s Pantagruel, on board the new yacht.’

‘Oh, I am perfect in that character, I suppose? And is she after all, like Pantagruel’s ship, to be loaded with hemp? Well, we must try two or three milder cargoes first. But come, find me some starving genius—some græculus esuriens—’

‘Who will ascend to the heaven of your lordship’s eloquence for the bidding?’

‘Five shillings a sheet—there will be about two of them, I think, in the pamphlet.’

‘May I take the liberty of recommending my cousin here?’

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‘Your cousin?’ And he turned to me, who had been examining with a sad and envious eye the contents of the bookshelves. Our eyes met, and first a faint blush, and then a smile of recognition, passed over his magnificent countenance.

‘I think I had—I am ashamed that I cannot say the pleasure, of meeting him at the boat-race yesterday.’

My cousin looked inquiringly and vexed at us both. The nobleman smiled.

‘Oh, the fault is mine, not his.’

‘I cannot think,’ I answered, ‘that you have any reasons to remember with shame your own kindness and courtesy. As for me,’ I went on bitterly, ‘I suppose a poor journeyman tailor who ventures to look on at the sports of gentlemen, only deserves to be run over.’

‘Sir,’ he said, looking at me with a severe and searching glance, ‘your bitterness is pardonable—but not your sneer. You do not yourself think what you say, and you ought to know that I think it still less than yourself. If you intend your irony to be useful, you should keep it till you can use it courageously against the true offenders.’

I looked up at him fiercely enough, but the placid smile which had returned to his face disarmed me.

‘Your class,’ he went on, ‘blind yourselves and our class as much by wholesale denunciations of us, as we, alas! who should know better, do by wholesale denunciations of you. As you grow older, you will learn that there are exceptions to every rule.’

‘And yet the exception proves the rule.’

‘Most painfully true, sir. But that argument is two-edged. For instance, am I to consider it the exception or the rule, when I am told that you, a journeyman tailor, are able to correct these proofs for me?’

‘Nearer the rule, I think, than you yet fancy.’

‘You speak out boldly and well; but how can you judge what I may please to fancy? At all events, I will make trial of you. There are the proofs. Bring them to me by four o’clock this afternoon, and if they are well

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done, I will pay you more than I should do to the average hack-writer, for you will deserve more.'

I took the proofs; he turned to go, and by a side-look at George beckoned him out of the room. I heard a whispering in the passage; and I do not deny that my heart beat high with new hopes, as I caught unwillingly the words—

'Such a forehead!—such an eye!—such a contour of feature as that!—Locule mi—that boy ought not to be mending trousers.'

My cousin returned, half laughing, half angry.

'Alton, you fool, why did you let out that you were a snip?'

'I am not ashamed of my trade.'

'I am, then. However, you've done with it now; and if you can't come the gentleman, you may as well come the rising genius. The self-educated dodge pays well just now; and after all, you've hooked his lordship—thank me for that. But you'll never hold him, you impudent dog, if you pull so hard on him.'—He went on, putting his hands into his coat-tail pockets, and sticking himself in front of the fire, like the Delphic Pythoness upon the sacred tripod, in hopes, I suppose, of some oracular afflatus—'You will never hold him, I say, if you pull so hard on him. You ought to "My lord" him for months yet, at least. You know, my good fellow, you must take every possible care to pick up what good-breeding you can, if I take the trouble to put you in the way of good society, and tell you where my private birds'-nests are, like the green schoolboy some poet or other talks of.'

'He is no lord of mine,' I answered, 'in any sense of the word, and therefore I shall not call him so.'

'Upon my honour! here is a young gentleman who intends to rise in the world, and then commences by trying to walk through the first post he meets! Noodle! can't you do like me, and get out of the carts' way when they come by? If you intend to go ahead, you must just dodge in and out like a dog at a fair. "She stoops to

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conquer" is my motto, and a precious good one too.

'I have no wish to conquer Lord Lynedale, and so I shall not stoop to him.'

'I have, then ; and to very good purpose, too. I am his whetstone, for polishing up that classical wit of his on, till he carries it into Parliament to astonish the country squires. He fancies himself a second Goethe, I hav'n't forgot his hitting at me, before a large supper party, with a certain epigram of that old turkeycock's about the whale having his unmentionable parasite—and the great man likewise. Whale, indeed ! I bide my time, Alton, my boy—I bide my time ; and then let your grand aristocrat look out ! If he does not find the supposed whale-unmentionable a good stout holding harpoon, with a tough line to it, and a long one, it's a pity, Alton, my boy !'

And he burst into a coarse laugh, tossed himself down on the sofa, and re-lighted his meerschaum.

'He seemed to me,' I answered, 'to have a peculiar courtesy and liberality of mind towards those below him in rank.'

'Oh ! he had, had he ? Now, I'll just put you up to a dodge. He intends to come the Mirabeau—fancies his mantle has fallen on him—prays before the fellow's bust, I believe, if one knew the truth, for a double portion of his spirit ; and therefore it is a part of his game to ingratiate himself with all potboy-dom, while at heart he is as proud, exclusive an aristocrat, as ever wore nobleman's hat. At all events, you may get something out of him, if you play your cards well—or, rather, help me to play mine ; for I consider him as my property, and you only as my aide-de-camp.'

'I shall play no one's cards,' I answered, sulkily. 'I am doing work fairly, and shall be fairly paid for it, and keep my own independence.'

'Independence—heyday ! Have you forgotten that, after all, you are my—guest, to call it by the mildest term ?'

'Do you upbraid me with that ?' I said, starting up.

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‘Do you expect me to live on your charity, on condition of doing your dirty work? You do not know me, sir. I leave your roof this instant!’

‘You do not!’ answered he, laughing loudly, as he sprang over the sofa, and set his back against the door. ‘Come, come, you Will-o’-the-Wisp, as full of flights, and fancies, and vagaries, as a sick old maid! can’t you see which side your bread is buttered? Sit down, I say! Don’t you know that I’m as good-natured a fellow as ever lived, although I do parade a little *Gil Blas* morality now and then, just for fun’s sake? Do you think I should be so open with it, if I meant anything very diabolic? There—sit down, and don’t go into King Cambyses’ vein, or Queen Hecuba’s tears either, which you seem inclined to do.’

‘I know you have been very generous to me,’ I said, penitently; ‘but a kindness becomes none when you are upbraided with it.’

‘So say the copybooks—I deny it. At all events, I’ll say no more; and you shall sit down there, and write as still as a mouse till two, while I tackle this never-to-be-enough-by-unhappy-third-years’-men-execrated Griffin’s Optics.’

At four that afternoon, I knocked, proofs in hand, at the door of Lord Lynedale’s rooms in the King’s Parade. The door was opened by a little elderly groom, grey-coated, grey-gaitered, grey-haired, grey-visaged. He had the look of a respectable old family retainer, and his exquisitely neat groom’s dress gave him a sort of interest in my eyes. Class costumes, relics though they are of feudalism, carry a charm with them. They are symbolic, definitive; they bestow a personality on the wearer, which satisfies the mind, by enabling it instantly to classify him, to connect him with a thousand stories and associations; and to my young mind, the wiry, shrewd, honest, grim old serving-man seemed the incarnation of all the wonders of Newmarket, and the hunting-kennel, and the steeple-chase, of which I had read, with alternate admiration and

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contempt, in the newspapers. He ushered me in with a good breeding which surprised me ;—without insolence to me, or servility to his master ; both of which I had been taught to expect.

Lord Lynedale bade me very courteously sit down while he examined the proofs. I looked round the low-wainscoted apartment, with its narrow mullioned windows, in extreme curiosity. What a real nobleman's abode could be like, was naturally worth examining, to one who had, all his life, heard of the aristocracy as of some mythic Titans—whether fiends or gods, being yet a doubtful point—altogether enshrined on 'cloudy Olympus,' invisible to mortal ken. The shelves were gay with morocco, Russia leather, and gilding—not much used, as I thought, till my eye caught one of the gorgeously bound volumes lying on the table in a loose cover of polished leather—a refinement of which poor I should never have dreamt. The walls were covered with prints, which soon turned my eyes from everything else, to range delighted over Landseers, Turners, Roberts's Eastern sketches, the ancient Italian masters ; and I recognised, with a sort of friendly affection, an old print of my favourite St. Sebastian, in the Dulwich Gallery. It brought back to my mind a thousand dreams, and a thousand sorrows. Would those dreams be ever realised ? Might this new acquaintance possibly open some pathway towards their fulfilment ?—some vista towards the attainment of a station where they would, at least, be less chimerical ? And at that thought, my heart beat loud with hope. The room was choked up with chairs and tables, of all sorts of strange shapes and problematical uses. The floor was strewn with skins of bear, deer, and seal. In a corner lay hunting-whips, and fishing-rods, foils, boxing-gloves, and gun-cases ; while over the chimney-piece, an array of rich Turkish pipes, all amber and enamel, contrasted curiously with quaint old swords and daggers—bronze classic casts, upon Gothic oak brackets, and fantastic scraps of continental carving. On the centre table, too, reigned the same rich profusion, or

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if you will, confusion—MSS., *Notes in Egypt*, Goethe's *Walverwandschaften*, Murray's Handbooks, and Plato's *Republic*. What was there not there? And I chuckled inwardly, to see how Bell's *Life in London* and the *Ecclesiologist* had, between then, got down *M'Culloch on Taxation*, and were sitting, arm in arm, triumphantly astride of him. Everything in the room, even to the fragrant flowers in a German glass, spoke of a travelled and cultivated luxury—manifold tastes and powers of self-enjoyment and self-improvement, which, Heaven forgive me if I envied, as I looked upon them. If I, now, had had one-twentieth part of those books, prints, that experience of life, not to mention that physical strength and beauty, which stood towering there before the fire—so simple, so utterly unconscious of the innate nobleness and grace which shone out from every motion of those stately limbs and features—all the delicacy which blood can give, combined, as one does sometimes see, with the broad strength of the proletarian—so different from poor me!—and so different, too, as I recollected with perhaps a savage pleasure, from the miserable, stunted specimens of over-bred imbecility whom I had often passed in London! A strange question that of birth! and one in which the philosopher, in spite of himself, must come to democratic conclusions. For, after all, the physical and intellectual superiority of the high-born is only preserved, as it was in the old Norman times, by the continual practical abnegation of the very caste-lie on which they pride themselves—by continual renovation of their race, by intermarriage with the ranks below them. The blood of Odin flowed in the veins of Norman William; true—and so did the tanner's of Falaise!

At last he looked up and spoke courteously—

'I'm afraid I have kept you long; but now, here is for your corrections, which are capital. I have really to thank you for a lesson in writing English.' And he put a sovereign into my hand.

'I am very sorry,' said I, 'but I have no change.'

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‘Never mind that. Your work is well worth the money.’

‘But,’ I said, ‘you agreed with me for five shillings a sheet, and—I do not wish to be rude, but I cannot accept your kindness. We working men make a rule of abiding by our wages, and taking nothing which looks like——’

‘Well, well—and a very good rule it is. I suppose, then, I must find out some way for you to earn more. Good afternoon.’ And he motioned me out of the room, followed me downstairs, and turned off towards the College Gardens.

I wandered up and down, feeding my greedy eyes, till I found myself again upon the bridge where I had stood that morning, gazing with admiration and astonishment at a scene which I have often expected to see painted or described, and which, nevertheless, in spite of its unique magnificence, seems strangely overlooked by those who cater for the public taste, with pen and pencil. The vista of bridges, one after another spanning the stream; the long line of great monastic palaces, all unlike, and yet all in harmony, sloping down to the stream, with their trim lawns and ivied walls, their towers and buttresses; and opposite them, the range of rich gardens and noble timber-trees, dimly seen through which, at the end of the gorgeous river avenue, towered the lofty buildings of St. John’s. The whole scene, under the glow of a rich May afternoon, seemed to me a fragment out of the *Arabian Nights* or Spenser’s *Fairy Queen*. I leaned upon the parapet, and gazed, and gazed, so absorbed in wonder and enjoyment, that I was quite unconscious, for some time, that Lord Lynedale was standing by my side, engaged in the same employment. He was not alone. Hanging on his arm was a lady, whose face, it seemed to me, I ought to know. It certainly was one not to be easily forgotten. She was beautiful, but with the face and figure rather of a Juno than a Venus—dark, imperious, restless—the lips almost too firmly set, the brow almost too massive and projecting—a queen rather to be feared

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than loved—but a queen still, as truly royal as the man into whose face she was looking up with eager admiration and delight, as he pointed out to her eloquently the several beauties of the landscape. Her dress was as plain as that of any Quaker ; but the grace of its arrangement, of every line and fold, was enough, without the help of the heavy gold bracelet on her wrist, to proclaim her a fine lady ; by which term, I wish to express the result of that perfect education in taste and manner, down to every gesture, which Heaven forbid that I, professing to be a poet, should undervalue. It is beautiful ; and therefore I welcome it, in the name of the Author of all beauty. I value it so highly, that I would fain see it extend, not merely from Belgravia to the tradesman's villa, but thence, as I believe it one day will, to the labourer's hovel, and the needlewoman's garret.

Half in bashfulness, half in the pride which shrinks from anything like intrusion, I was moving away ; but the nobleman, recognising me with a smile and a nod, made some observation on the beauty of the scene before us. Before I could answer, however, I saw that his companion's eyes were fixed intently on my face.

'Is this,' she said to Lord Lynedale, 'the young person of whom you were speaking to me just now ? I fancy that I recollect him, though, I daresay, he has forgotten me.'

If I had forgotten the face, that voice, so peculiarly rich, deep, and marked in its pronunciation of every syllable, recalled her instantly to my mind. It was the dark lady of the Dulwich Gallery !

'I met you, I think,' I said, 'at the picture gallery at Dulwich, and you were kind enough, and——and some persons who were with you, to talk to me about a picture there.'

'Yes ; Guido's St. Sebastian. You seemed fond of reading then. I am glad to see you at college.'

I explained that I was not at college. That led to fresh gentle questions on her part, till I had given her all the leading points of my history. There was nothing in it of which I ought to have been ashamed.

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She seemed to become more and more interested in my story, and her companion also.

‘And have you tried to write? I recollect my uncle advising you to try a poem on St. Sebastian. It was spoken, perhaps, in jest; but it will not, I hope, have been labour lost, if you have taken it in earnest.’

‘Yes—I have written on that and on other subjects, during the last few years.’

‘Then, you must let us see them, if you have them with you. I think my uncle, Arthur, might like to look over them; and if they were fit for publication, he might be able to do something towards it.’

‘At all events,’ said Lord Lynedale, ‘a self-educated author is always interesting. Bring any of your poems, that you have with you, to the Eagle this afternoon, and leave them there for Dean Winnstay; and to-morrow morning, if you have nothing better to do, call there between ten and eleven o’clock.’

He wrote me down the dean’s address, and nodding a civil good morning, turned away with his queenly companion, while I stood gazing after him, wondering whether all noblemen and high-born ladies were like them in person and in spirit—a question which, in spite of many noble exceptions, some of them well known and appreciated by the working men, I am afraid must be answered in the negative.

I took my MSS. to the Eagle, and wandered out once more, instinctively, among those same magnificent trees at the back of the colleges, to enjoy the pleasing torment of expectation. ‘My uncle!’ was he the same old man whom I had seen at the gallery; and if so, was Lillian with him? Delicious hope! And yet, what if she was with him—what to me? But yet I sat silent, dreaming, all the evening, and hurried early to bed—not to sleep, but to lie and dream on and on, and rise almost before light, eat no breakfast, and pace up and down, waiting impatiently for the hour at which I was to find out whether my dream was true.

And it was true! The first object I saw, when I

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entered the room, was Lillian, looking more beautiful than ever. The child of sixteen had blossomed into the woman of twenty. The ivory and vermilion of the complexion had toned down together into still richer hues. The dark hazel eyes shone with a more liquid lustre. The figure had become more rounded, without losing a line of that fairy lightness, with which her light morning-dress, with its delicate French semi-tones of colour, gay and yet not gaudy, seemed to harmonise. The little plump jewelled hands—the transparent chestnut hair, banded round the beautiful oval masque—the tiny feet, which, as Suckling has it,

Underneath her petticoat
Like little mice peeped in and out——

I could have fallen down, fool that I was ! and worshipped——what? I could not tell then, for I cannot tell even now.

The dean smiled recognition, bade me sit down, and disposed my papers, meditatively, on his knee. I obeyed him, trembling, choking—my eyes devouring my idol—forgetting why I had come—seeing nothing but her—listening for nothing but the opening of these lips. I believe the dean was some sentences deep in his oration before I became conscious thereof.

‘——And I think I may tell you, at once, that I have been very much surprised and gratified with them. They evince on the whole, a far greater acquaintance with the English classic-models, and with the laws of rhyme and melody, than could have been expected from a young man of your class—*macte virtute puer*. Have you read any Latin?’

‘A little.’ And I went on staring at Lillian, who looked up, furtively, from her work, every now and then, to steal a glance at me, and set my poor heart thumping still more fiercely against my side.

‘Very good ; you will have the less trouble, then, in the preparation for college. You will find out for yourself, of course, the immense disadvantages of self-education.

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The fact is, my dear lord' (turning to Lord Lynedale), 'it is only useful as an indication of a capability of being educated by others. One never opens a book written by working men, without shuddering at a hundred faults of style. However, there are some very tolerable attempts among these—especially the imitations of Milton's *Comus*.'

Poor I had by no means intended them as imitations ; but such, no doubt they were.

'I am sorry to see that Shelley has had so much influence on your writing. He is a guide as irregular in taste, as unorthodox in doctrine ; though there are some pretty things in him now and then. And you have caught his melody tolerably here, now——'

'Oh, that is such a sweet thing !' said Lillian. 'Do you know, I read it over and over last night, and took it upstairs with me. How very fond of beautiful things you must be, Mr. Locke, to be able to describe so passionately the longing after them.'

That voice once more ! It intoxicated me, so that I hardly knew what I stammered out—something about working men having very few opportunities of indulging the taste for—I forget what. I believe I was on the point of running off into some absurd compliment, but I caught the dark lady's warning eye on me.

'Ah, yes ! I forgot. I daresay it must be a very stupid life. So little opportunity, as he says. What a pity he is a tailor, papa ! Such an unimaginative employment ! How delightful it would be to send him to college and make him a clergyman !'

Fool that I was ! I fancied—what did I not fancy ? never seeing how that very '*he*' bespoke the indifference—the gulf between us. I was not a man—an equal ; but a thing—a subject, who was to be talked over, and examined, and made into something like themselves, of their supreme and undeserved benevolence.

'Gently, gently, fair lady ! We must not be as headlong as some people would kindly wish to be. If this young man really has a proper desire to rise into a higher

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station, and I find him a fit object to be assisted in that praiseworthy ambition, why, I think he ought to go to some training college; St. Mark's, I should say, on the whole, might, by its strong Church principles, give the best antidote to any little remaining taint of *sansculottism*. You understand me, my lord! And, then, if he distinguished himself there it would be time to think of getting him a sizarship.'

'Poor Pegasus in harness!' half smiled, half sighed, the dark lady.

'Just the sort of youth,' whispered Lord Lynedale, loud enough for me to hear, 'to take out with us to the Mediterranean as secretary—*s'il y avait là de la morale*, of course——'

Yes—and of course, too, the tailor's boy was not expected to understand French. But the most absurd thing was, how everybody, except perhaps the dark lady, seemed to take for granted that I felt myself exceedingly honoured, and must consider it, as a matter of course, the greatest possible stretch of kindness thus to talk me over, and settle everything for me, as if I was not a living soul, but a plant in a pot. Perhaps they were not unsupported by experience. I suppose too many of us would have thought it so; there are flunkeys in all ranks, and to spare. Perhaps the true absurdity was the way in which I sat, demented, inarticulate, staring at Lillian, and only caring for any word which seemed to augur a chance of seeing her again; instead of saying as I felt, that I had no wish whatever to rise above my station; no intention whatever of being sent to training schools or colleges, or anywhere else at the expense of other people. And therefore it was that I submitted blindly, when the dean, who looked as kind, and was really, I believe, as kind as ever was human being, turned to me with a solemn authoritative voice—

'Well, my young friend, I must say that I am, on the whole, very much pleased with your performance. It corroborates, my dear lord, the assertion, for which I have been so often ridiculed, that there are many real men, capable of higher things, scattered up and down among

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the masses. 'Attend to me, sir!' (a hint which I suspect I very much wanted). 'Now, recollect; if it should be hereafter in our power to assist your prospects in life, you must give up, once and for all, the bitter tone against the higher classes, which I am sorry to see in your MSS. As you know more of the world, you will find that the poor are not by any means as ill-used as they are taught, in these days, to believe. The rich have their sorrows too—no one knows it better than I'—(and he played pensively with his gold pencil-case)—'and good and evil are pretty equally distributed among all ranks, by a just and merciful God. I advise you most earnestly, as you value your future success in life, to give up reading those unprincipled authors, whose aim is to excite the evil passions of the multitude; and to shut your ears betimes to the extravagant calumnies of demagogues, who make tools of enthusiastic and imaginative minds for their own selfish aggrandisement. Avoid politics; the workman has no more to do with them than the clergyman. We are told, on divine authority, to fear God and the king, and meddle not with those who are given to change. Rather put before yourself the example of such a man as the excellent Dr. Brown, one of the richest and most respected men of the university, with whom I hope to have the pleasure of dining this evening—and yet that man actually, for several years of his life, worked at a carpenter's bench!'

I too had something to say about all that. I too knew something about demagogues and working men: but the sight of Lillian made me a coward; and I only sat silent as the thought flashed across me, half ludicrous, half painful, by its contrast, of another who once worked at a carpenter's bench, and fulfilled His mission—not by an old age of wealth, respectability, and port wine; but on the Cross of Calvary. After all, the worthy old gentleman gave me no time to answer.

'Next—I think of showing these MSS. to my publisher, to get his opinion as to whether they are worth printing just now. Not that I wish you to build much on the chance. It is not necessary that you should be a poet. I

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should prefer mathematics for you, as a methodic discipline of the intellect. Most active minds write poetry, at a certain age—I wrote a good deal, I recollect, myself. But that is no reason for publishing. This haste to rush into print is one of the bad signs of the times—a symptom of the unhealthy activity which was first called out by the French revolution. In the Elizabethan age, every decently-educated gentleman was able, as a matter of course, to indite a sonnet to his mistress's eyebrow, or an epigram on his enemy; and yet he never dreamt of printing them. One of the few rational things I have met with, Eleanor, in the works of your very objectional pet Mr. Carlyle—though indeed his style is too intolerable to have allowed me to read much—is the remark that “speech is silver”—“silvern” he calls it, pedantically—“while silence is golden.”

At this point of the sermon, Lillian fled from the room, to my extreme disgust. But still the old man prosed—

‘I think, therefore, that you had better stay with your cousin for the next week. I hear from Lord Lynedale that he is a very studious, moral, rising young man; and I only hope that you will follow his good example. At the end of the week I shall return home, and then I shall be glad to see more of you at my house at D * * * *, about * * * * miles from this place. Good-morning.’

I went, in rapture at the last announcement—and yet my conscience smote me. I had not stood up for the working men. I had heard them calumniated, and held my tongue—but I was to see Lillian. I had let the dean fancy I was willing to become a pensioner on his bounty—that I was a member of the Church of England, and willing to go to a Church Training School—but I was to see Lillian. I had lowered myself in my own eyes—but I had seen Lillian. Perhaps I exaggerated my own offences: however, that may be, love soon silenced conscience, and I almost danced into my cousin's rooms on my return.

That week passed rapidly and happily. I was half-amused with the change in my cousin's demeanour. I

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had evidently risen immensely in his eyes; and I could not help applying, in my heart, to him, Mr. Carlyle's dictum about the valet species—how they never honour the unaccredited hero, having no eye to find him out till properly accredited, and countersigned, and accoutred with full uniform and diploma by that great god, Public Opinion. I saw through the motive of his new-fledged respect for me—and yet encouraged it; for it flattered my vanity. The world must forgive me. It was something for the poor tailor to find himself somewhat appreciated at last, even outwardly. And besides, this sad respect took a form which was very tempting to me now—though the week before it was just the one I should have repelled with scorn. George became very anxious to lend me money, to order me clothes at his own tailor's, and set me up in various toilette refinements, that I might make a respectable appearance at the dean's. I knew that he consulted rather the honour of the family, than my good; but I did not know that his aim was also to get me into his power; and I refused more and more weakly at each fresh offer, and at last consented, in an evil hour, to sell my own independence, for the sake of indulging my love-dream, and appearing to be what I was not.

I saw little of the University men; less than I might have done; less, perhaps, than I ought to have done. My cousin did not try to keep me from them; they, whenever I met them, did not shrink from me, and were civil enough: but I shrank from them. My cousin attributed my reserve to modesty, and praised me for it in his coarse fashion: but he was mistaken. Pride, rather, and something very like envy, kept me silent. Always afraid (at that period of my career) of young men of my own age, I was doubly afraid of these men; not because they were cleverer than I, for they were not, but because I fancied I had no fair chance with them; they had opportunities which I had not, read and talked of books of which I knew nothing; and when they did touch on matters which I fancied I understood, it was

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from a point of view so different from mine, that I had to choose, as I thought, between standing up alone to be baited by the whole party, or shielding myself behind a proud and somewhat contemptuous silence. I looked on them as ignorant aristocrats ; while they looked on me, I verily believe now, as a very good sort of fellow, who ought to talk well, but would not ; and went their way carelessly. The truth is, I did envy those men. I did not envy them their learning ; for the majority of men who came into my cousin's room had no learning to envy, being rather brilliant and agreeable men than severe students ; but I envied them their opportunities of learning ; and envied them just as much their opportunities of play—their boating, their cricket, their football, their riding, and their gay confident carriage, which proceeds from physical health and strength, and which I mistook for the swagger of insolence ; while Parker's Piece, with its games, was a sight which made me grind my teeth, when I thought of the very different chance of physical exercise which falls to the lot of a London artisan.

And still more did I envy them when I found that many of them combined, as my cousin did, this physical exercise with really hard mental work, and found the one help the other. It was bitter to me—whether it ought to have been so or not—to hear of prizemen, wranglers, fellows of colleges, as first-rate oars, boxers, football players ; and my eyes once fairly filled with tears, when, after the departure of a little fellow no bigger or heavier than myself, but with the eye and the gait of a game-cock, I was informed that he was 'bow-oar in the University eight, and as sure to be senior classic next year as he has a head on his shoulders.' And I thought of my nights of study in the lean-to garret, and of the tailor's workshop, and of Sandy's den, and said to myself bitter words, which I shall not set down. Let gentlemen readers imagine them for themselves ; and judge rationally and charitably of an unhealthy working man like me, if his tongue be betrayed, at moments, to envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.

Alton Locke

However, one happiness I had—books. I read in my cousin's room from morning till night. He gave me my meals hospitably enough : but disappeared every day about four to 'hall' ; after which he did not reappear till eight, the interval being taken up, he said, 'in wines' and an hour of billiards. Then he sat down to work, and read steadily and well till twelve, while I, nothing loth, did the same ; and so passed, rapidly enough, my week at Cambridge.

END OF VOL. I

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